



AMONG  
the  
PALMS  
NINA LARRÉ DURYEA



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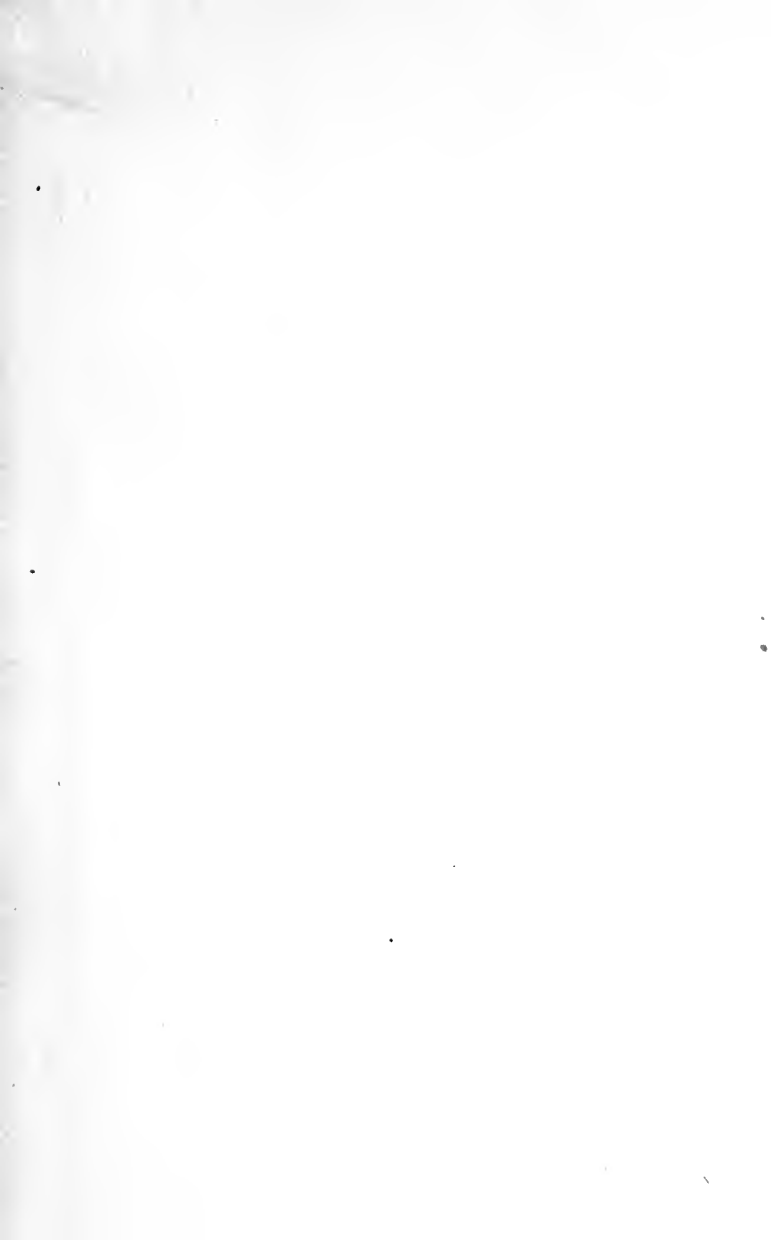
For Belle Franklin  
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For Mr. & Mrs.

St. Augustine

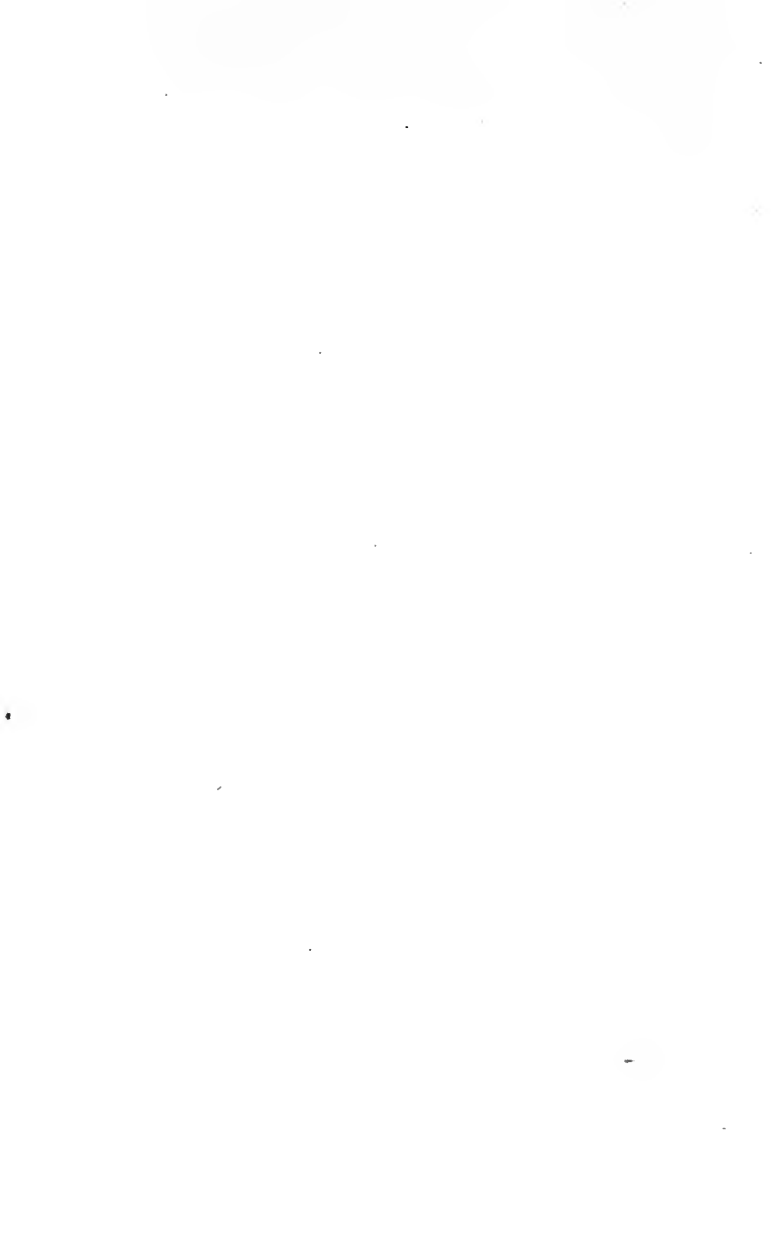
March 29/1884





# AMONG THE PALMS







HOTEL ROYAL POINCIANA



# *Among the Palms*

By

NINA LARRÉ DURYEA

*"Je m'amuse pour vous amuser"*



NEW YORK  
J. F. TAYLOR & COMPANY  
1903

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*Published February, 1903*

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ASBORN TO VINN

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**“IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”**



# *Among the Palms*

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## “IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”

*An Episode of Palm Beach*

### Chapter I

“**A**S the tiny mote floating in the sun-beam, does its part toward maintaining the balance of the Universe, so the influence of our lives, despite their individual insignificance, cannot be wholly lost.”

Cyril Winthrop had but to close her eyes on the luxurious disorder of her room, with its countless knickknacks and costly appointments, to imagine herself again listening to those words in the dimly lit Cathedral. She saw the drooping, pathetic face of the Christ on the high altar; the twinkling lights below, indistinct and blurred by the clouds of incense floating in wreaths about the chancel; the absorbed atten-

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tion of the congregation, white and black, and the impassioned face of the preacher. The remembrance of that face disturbed her—its terrible earnestness had shaken her habitual complacency.

“The influence of our lives is never lost.” Was it true? Was her selfish life to mar other lives after she had passed away? “He, at least, believes it,” she thought. “It is all real to him—our eternal damnation or everlasting bliss and—he cares!”

The previous evening she had been sitting in the rotunda of *Royal Poinciana*, among a number of other frost-bitten Northerners who had fled to Palm Beach for a thaw under the orange blossoms. The season’s gaieties had somewhat palled upon her, and her usually radiant spirits were rather depressed. John Nesbitt coming in from his after dinner cigar, had suggested that they should hear the midnight mass at the Cathedral in the town across the bridge. It was Good Friday, and the services were to be especially impressive.



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“Father Gaston is to preach,” he said, “and he is really unusual. He is just over from Rome, and has taken this as his first pastorate. They say he is as handsome as Antinous, as eloquent as Demosthenes, and as spiritually exalted as Savonarola. Could you ask more?”

She went, much as she would to the play, with the result that she, the cynic of twenty-two, lay here tossing to and fro on her comfortable bed, with the closing sentence of the sermon ringing in her ears.

“If I could but know whether he is right and all my old ideas wrong! Was his mind simply trained to accept it all, or is his faith a natural attribute?”

She was conscious of curious mental uneasiness. She rose and went to the window. The soft, moist air swayed the curtains inward, and stirred her hair as she stood there. The light from the low-hanging moon of the Southern skies rippled through the lace draperies, and swept over her into the room, glinting here and there on the polished surface of the silver on

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her dressing table, revealing distinctly the luxurious furnishings of the room.

Cyril Winthrop had been compared by a friend from Boston to the Egyptian obelisk in Central Park with its coating of parafine. "Like it, you are apparently impervious to both the burnings and frosts of life, with this effective though intangible mask," he had said.

She recalled this dubious compliment as she leaned against the window. "Am I really feeling this, or am I simply relishing the artistic side of circumstances? How I wish I could look over and beyond myself! He might help me to do it: in fact, he did make me forget myself while he spoke. I should like to meet the man. He is original, clever, and has the novelty of never having known women. I wonder what he thinks of us!" With a sudden thought, she stood erect and motionless.

"I have it," she said, half audibly. "I will make this interesting priest's acquaintance."

She searched about in the dimness, and found her pen, ink and paper. These she brought to

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the window, and kneeling down placed them on the window sill.

“Heavens!” she thought: “if Mamma should awaken and come in, to find me writing to an unknown man, and he a priest! Yet there can be no real harm in it.”

With one hand gathering back her loosened hair, she held the pen poised over the crested sheet.

“FATHER GASTON :—

“Pardon the liberty taken by a stranger sojourning here for the Winter months. Chancing to hear your sermon last evening I was impressed by some of the points. If you could find time to call, it would be agreeable, and no doubt profitable to talk further with you upon the subject of your sermon.

“Sincerely yours,

“Monday, *Royal Poinciana*.                      CYRIL WINTHROP.”

“There! it is done. But it is certainly somewhat audacious. Yet he won’t know whether it is from a man or woman till he comes, for the name tells nothing, and John says my handwriting is masculine enough for a Wall Street Broker.”

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<sup>1</sup> The note, folded and sealed, was placed conspicuously upon her pin-cushion with a complacent smile. Then with a yawn, the girl sought her pillow, and was soon oblivious of theology and all else.

She had left New York reluctantly, for she loved her brilliant existence there, much as the gamin loves the blaze of the street procession with its prancing and feathers, and all the other excitements of his irresponsible existence. Her delicate beauty concealed the strength and force which was the undercurrent of her character. Her sensitive, mobile face appeared the mirror of every thought, but alas! for those unlucky wights who so regarded her. Superficially, she was candor itself. Few detected the shrewd and analytical spirit that lay ambushed behind that "thoroughbred" frankness.

It was an oft-repeated joke of her mother's, that when a child she was first taught that *a-b* spelled *ab* she asked, "How do you know that it does?" "Because it does—I was told so when I was your age," her governess replied,

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rather staggered. “But how did your teacher know and her teacher know?” she asked again, and again, and refused to accept the proposition. She required proof beyond question as to all people and all things—without it she gave neither her confidence nor belief. Some people thought her hard, and it was sometimes now a question with herself. She certainly lacked sensitiveness, yet there were times when sympathy of the most tender sort proved a heart far from indifferent. Once, while driving in the Park, she noticed a poor woman with young children trying to cross the crowded road, while the policeman stood by, wholly blind to her frightened efforts. With a bound Cyril was out of the carriage, and with eyes aflame guided the woman across, and then gave the startled guardian of pedestrians a lecture which left him half indignant but wholly repentant.

Her mother, a nervous woman of amiable but rather feeble proclivities, regarded her daughter much as a brilliant bird of another

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species than her own. Her pride in Cyril's beauty, artistic gowns and social success, was the mainspring of her existence. She was emotionally religious, and extremely high church in her views, and spent her leisure hours in embroidering elaborated stoles and altar cloths. Cyril allowed her to do as she liked, but when, during a Lent of special devotion, her mother with several other ladies of high degree, relieved their over-burdened consciences by scrubbing the floor of their church, Cyril thought things had gone far enough. Perhaps it was the effect of such affectations, combined with the girl's natural type of mind, that left her with so limited a religious belief. For the clergy, as a class, she professed but little admiration. When on Sunday she joined other respectable members of society in their luxurious church on Fifth Avenue, and the sleek, well kept rector rose to dilate on the responsibility of saving human souls, the girl queried—"Does he really mean all that? Can he believe that one single soul in this vast congregation

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is in danger of Hell fire, and after his eloquent peroration go out smiling and contented to his comfortable dinner? Either he does not believe what he preaches, or else he is without a spark of love for his fellowmen.”

And was not the whole system one of selfishness? If she was good, she was told she would receive as a reward the sugar plum. If she was not good, then punishment was to follow. And yet she was so made as to find all wrong things attractive, and all good things irksome. In fact she generally found it more pleasant to serve Mammon, and she did so.

John Nesbitt, whom she was to marry the coming June, represented in great part, the Mammon which she served. The son of wealthy parents, he had not joined the great army of money-seekers, but spent several years in Europe, where he picked up several languages, a slightly foreign manner, and some very good bric-a-brac. A big, kind-hearted fellow, essentially a Club man, he troubled himself very little about things beyond his own

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horizon. He adored Cyril as a being far above him mentally, and since their engagement he had given up any hopes of understanding what he called her "vagaries."

She dominated him in every particular and had convinced herself she loved him. He had an attractive background of yachts, fine horses and houses in New York and London, and this prospective brilliancy surrounded him as a golden halo. All this was to be Cyril's some day, but occasionally, in spite of the envy of her friends, she felt a certain contempt for the sort of woman that circumstances were to make her.

"At forty, I shall be a cool-headed, hard woman of the world," she often thought. "My better impulses will die a natural death, and I shall not even regret their loss. I shall be a giver of fine dinners and the owner of a bad digestion—shall have contempt for the world I live in, yet be a slave to its opinion, and shall die a joyless old woman."





THE LONG WALK



## Chapter II

FATHER GASTON stood at the door of the post-office, with his unopened letters in his hand, hesitating. All through the long, hot day, he had been going from one end of the town to the other, visiting his flock, nearly all strangers to him. He had adapted himself to so many different individualities, and interested himself in so many divergent channels of the lives about him, that he felt a little dazed and tired.

His great batch of letters, some from his colleagues far away in Rome, tempted him to a quiet hour before the Vesper service; but he crossed to his house and gave them to a lad in a long, black soutane, who was watering the flowers. Then, with his long, swinging stride the priest went rapidly through the ugly little streets of the town to the bridge which led to the paradise of palms and blossoms which surround the hotels. The previous day he had received a note from someone who might be

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leaving, and under the stately Colonial pillars of the *Poinciana* entrance he paused and drew from his wallet a square envelope, addressed in a bold masculine hand. He glanced at the signature, then passed on through the great hall, with its group of men and women scattered among the palms, through the rotunda, to the desk. More than one head turned as he passed, and a bell-boy nudging his companion, asked—

“Who’s dat stunner any how? He’s like de bery king hisself?”

The smiling clerk forgot to twirl his moustache as he looked into the grave, beautiful face of the priest.

“Will you kindly send my card to Mr. Cyril Winthrop?”

The clerk turned several leaves of the register before him.

“There is no Mr. Winthrop stopping here,” he replied, “but a Miss Cyril Winthrop of New York, is here.”

Father Gaston looked puzzled and opened the note again.

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“Well, she may, perhaps, be the person.” Then after a little pause. “You may send up the card.”

The clerk touched a bell. “Room 248, and the gentleman is waiting.”

The boy returned in a moment. “Dis way, sar, if you please, sar, one flight up.”

With an impish grin thrown to his companions, he led the way along the thickly carpeted hall, pausing before a white-paneled door. He knocked. Through the open transom came only a murmur of voices and tinkling as of glass. A louder knock brought a clear “Come in!” The door opened. A confused crowd of youthful faces met Father Gaston’s eyes. From the corner of the room a tall, girlish figure advanced with outstretched hand.

“Father Gaston, is it not?” she asked. “I am the writer of the note, and thank you so much for coming.”

She led him to a divan before which stood the samovar and, drawing aside her delicate draperies, motioned him to the vacant seat be-

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side her. The ripple of voices and laughter about them dropped sensibly to a lower key. John Nesbitt crossed to Mrs. Winthrop, who with lorgnette raised was coolly surveying the stranger.

"Who is he?" she asked, with suppressed curiosity. "Isn't he superb?"

John smiled and leaned toward her.

"He is Father Gaston of whom everyone is talking, but only Heaven knows how Cyril got him to five o'clock tea. The man is just out of a Roman College, and presumably knows no more of social life than a monk of the middle ages. But Cyril has captured the lion in some mysterious way. Just like her—but odd she didn't mention it."

Meanwhile Father Gaston, having placed his broad-brimmed hat on the floor beside him, was endeavoring to adapt himself to circumstances as best he cou'd.

"One or two lumps?" asked Cyril with utmost ease, sugar tongs poised over his cup, and a glance at his grave face, which she was glad

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showed no sign of embarrassment or regret. “No doubt he is inwardly praying that his eyes may be turned away from beholding vanity,” she thought.

“It was very kind of you to come,” she said. “for I understand you have recently settled here, and must necessarily have much to occupy your time.”

“It gives me great pleasure,” he replied, with a bright smile, “and still more to find that my sermons can reach beyond my parish. I really did not know it was a lady who asked me to call. But,” he added, “I have sisters and I know the value of woman’s work in the world, and shall be most happy to be of any assistance to Miss Winthrop.”

Cyril found herself coloring at being taken for a “worker.”

“Oh! I beg you to understand that I am not a Roman Catholic: indeed I am not a very good Protestant. I was simply impressed strongly by your views of life, and I very impulsively resolved to ask you to help me to accomplish

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some little good while here during March. We have come to rest from our gaieties in New York, but what with the out-door life all day, and dancing every night, one is more tired than before. It was your sermon of Good-Friday which made me feel still more tired of it all." She paused and glanced at Father Gaston's strong face.

"I am only too glad Miss Winthrop, if any words of mine helped you to realize the importance of earnest living. Believe me, it is that which makes noble men and women. There are many things to be done here in Palm Beach, which I feel sure you could do ably, and which would benefit you as well as others."

Cyril, thinking no more of the incongruous surroundings, leaned forward, her eyes brilliant and eager. "Only tell me what," she said, "and I'll try. You don't know how glad I should be. So far, my life hasn't been much to boast of: the world would get on quite as well without me."



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“If you are really in want of something to do,” Father Gaston said with candid interest, “I can tell you now of a young girl, no older than yourself, but poor, terribly poor, who is lying ill in such poverty as you doubtless never dreamed of. She is one of a family of poor whites—‘Crackers,’ they are called here, who live in a shanty across the lake. The girl, Hannah Neal, is suffering for the bare necessities, and if you could see and aid her, I should be very grateful.”

Cyril assented eagerly, and while getting explicit directions, her mother approached. Cyril presented Father Gaston and left them together in animated conversation. He observed the girl as she moved about the room. “She is as full of force as a race-horse,” he thought. Her frankness and her course in seeking his help puzzled him. Women he knew were full of impulses and difficult to understand, but this girl’s face was noble beneath her apparent flippancy; surely her nature must be so too. Her strong individuality impressed him, and Pas-

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cal's trite saying came into his mind "*Si le nez de Cléopâtre eut plus été, ou plus court, peut-être toute la surface de la terre aurait changée.*"

Women were certainly a power in the world.

She came back to him.

"I want to present my friend Mr. Nesbitt," she said gaily, and while they talked, stood silently by, taking mental measurement of the two men. When the priest took leave, with the *savoir faire* of an accomplished man of the world, she listened to John Nesbitt's good-natured opinion, "Father Gaston was an all round jolly chap," with an expression that mystified him. At dinner also, he found his usually gay fiancée somewhat reflective and subdued. Afterward, while sauntering through the loggias he rallied her on her mood. She roused herself, obviously with an effort.

"You are satisfied with me just as I am—as I am, are you not?" she asked.

"Of course, my Cyril," he replied. "I would not have you different in any way. You are

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just the prettiest, best dressed girl going, and ”

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“ But,” she interrupted, “ for all that I’m going to try to be different. I don’t like being merely pretty and well dressed.”

“ Now don’t frighten me, my dear girl,” he said laughingly. “ I shall be afraid of seeing a halo shine around your head if you are going to be more perfect.”

## Chapter III

A ONE story, white-washed shanty, built on the shore of Lake George. The waters flowed at full tide almost to the door, and at every ebb left its refuse. Planks were laid from the road to the entrance, over which Cyril Winthrop and her maid found their way with some difficulty. The air was redolent with noxious odors from the gasworks near by and insect life was evident, in all the activity of a Southern latitude. After knocking without answer, they took advantage of the half opened door, and entered. There was no one to be seen in this room, half chamber and half kitchen. The floor, through the cracks of which the moist ground below was visible, had apparently never known a broom, and upon a small stove a kettle sent up a thin curl of steam. Cyril passed on to a door at the farther end of the room and upon opening it, an exclamation of astonishment and pity escaped her. On a cot, covered with a wretched,

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patched quilt, lay a girl, her pallid face turned to the wall. Tangled curls lay in matted rings about her forehead, and one hand held a small brown, wooden crucifix. The sun played through the window, from the sill of which a chicken took flight at their entrance. Cyril crossed to the motionless girl and softly touched her claw-like hand. A pair of sunken brown eyes opened and stared as though at a vision.

“Father Gaston has sent me to you,” she said, “I am to try and make you more comfortable. Don’t talk now—wait till I arrange things a little.” And at the mention of the priest’s name came an expression of satisfaction into the wan face. “Dobbs,” turning to her maid, standing horrified in the doorway, “bring the basket. Now go and see if you can find some clean, warm water.”

A fever of energy possessed her. Out of the basket she brought a bottle of wine, some biscuits and a change of linen. Dobbs returned with water, and together they worked over the girl, who submitted to them with dull, pas-

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sive eyes, and smiled faintly, when clean and refreshed she was laid back on her pillow. Then Dobbs was sent to the nearest shop for dark cambric and tacks. Cyril drew a chair to the bed and sat down. The sick girl looked with silent wonder at the beautiful, pitying face bent over her.

“Now tell me something about yourself, if you are able,” she said. “Why are you here alone?”

Cyril had to bend lower to catch the whispered answer.

“Father has to go off to work every day. The colored woman next door comes in now and then, but she has her own family to look after.”

“How long have you been ill, Hannah?”

“Two months, Miss. It’s slow fever. I wouldn’t mind so much if I could sleep more.”

“Poor child,” said Cyril. “No wonder with this heat and flies. We’ll remedy all that.”

Presently the girl asked timidly, “Did you say Father Gaston sent you?”

## *“IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”*

“Yes, Hannah.”

The pallid face brightened. “He is good, Miss, he is. He sends things to eat, and sends the doctor too, and has sat where you are talking so beautiful. It rests me to look at him.”

The girl’s eyes closed. “So this is poverty,” thought Cyril. She looked about the bare, ugly little room, and thought of her own, at home. Here was a glimpse of a world of which she had never dreamed—a world where ease and pleasure were only names, and where want and suffering were terrible facts. It seemed to her as though a great, gay bubble had been pricked. Could she ever laugh and dance as gaily as before, with this picture of misery to remember? And such scenes were the daily portion of Father Gaston. That splendid strength was spent in alleviating such woes. In this life of total self-abnegation, without the ordinary ties of human affection, he was to live till he died. There were, of course, Protestant clergymen who were noble and self-sacrificing men too, but she had met few like Father Gaston. What

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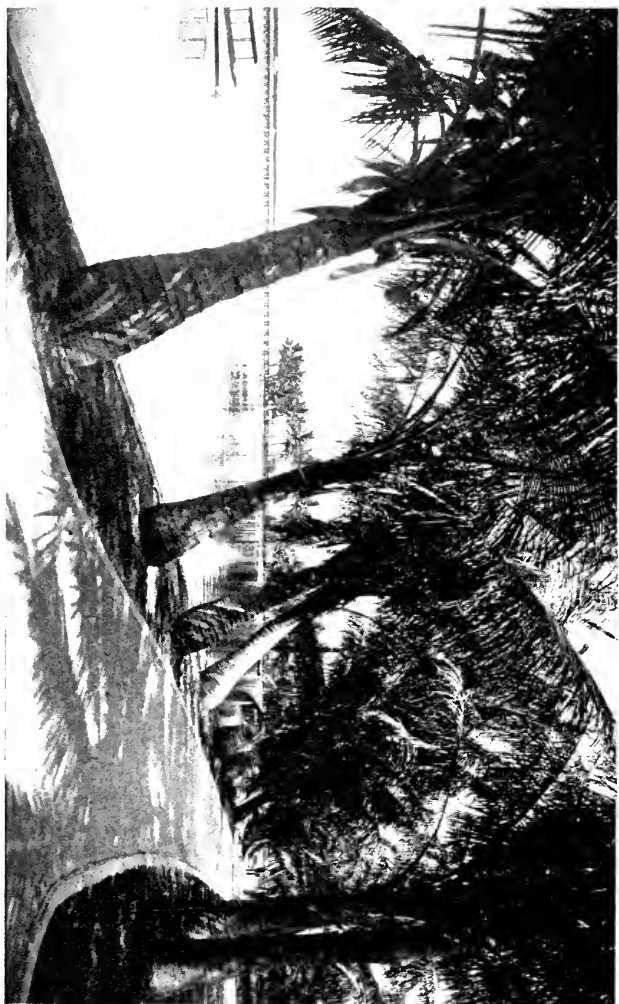
a pity he happened to be a priest. He could be such a power among thousands like herself.

Dobbs stood in the doorway. Cyril mounted on a nail keg, tacked the green curtain over the window, and a net across the bed, and the floor was swept. When all was done, Cyril viewed her work with pride. With a warm feeling at her heart she stroked back the girl's curls.

"I will come again soon, Hannah. Meanwhile let your father get anything you need," and she tucked a crisp banknote beneath the pillow.

When she was gone, the girl's eyes closed. "It must be something like this to have a mother," she thought.





THE PALM WALK



## Chapter IV

**S** EVEN o'clock in the morning. Cyril, awake and restless, resolved to go for a walk in the March air, now laden with the odor of orange blossoms which whitened the groves in and around Palm Beach. There was scarcely yet any sign of life as she strolled towards the water which glimmered through the garden shrubbery. Hatless she strolled on under the gigantic, frond-like sweep of the cocoa palms which bordered the walk by the lake. Turning sharply to the left, she went on through oleander, poinciana, orange and lemon groves, to the beach. How beautiful was this fresh awakening world! She shaded her eyes with her hand, and looked about. The gray line of the beach framed the ocean's deep blue and the paler blue near the shore, with its line of thundering breakers. A faint haze hung over land and water, foretelling heat for the coming day. She threw up both arms in very gladness of the scene before her, when

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hearing steps behind her, she turned to see Father Gaston coming toward her. He looked up, smiling at her confusion. During the past fortnight they had not only met beside the sick girl's bed, but he had availed himself of Mrs. Winthrop's earnest invitation to repeat his previous visit, and the formality of a new acquaintanceship had sensible lessened.

"I am as much astonished to find myself here as you are. It was one of my impulses," said Cyril, laughing.

"I want to thank you for what you are accomplishing at the Deals," he said. "The girl talks of you continually, and although she is not much better of her illness, the change in her surroundings is like new life to her. She calls you 'the Angel Miss.'"

"I too, am helped," Cyril replied, looking off into the distance with a softness in the gray depths of her eyes which touched him.

"There is material here for making a noble woman," he thought. "Who would not wish to help her?"

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The girl turned to him. “I cannot imagine how you ever became a priest, you seem so much a man of the world in many ways. Yet it must have been of your own free will. Would you mind telling me about it sometime?”

“I will tell you with great pleasure,” he replied. “It was an odd chance which turned my steps into the Church.”

“I should like very much to know it,” Cyril said, wistfully.

He paced up and down for a few moments in silence, then seated himself beside her on the sand.

“Thirteen years ago I was studying in Heidelberg. Like many of the students there, I led a gay life. My parents had died in my childhood, and left me a considerable fortune, so I had no restraint save my own self-respect. One Spring, several friends and myself started off for a trip through Holland and Belgium. We were a merry crowd, and in for all sorts of pranks, though eager for the education which travel will bring. Some of us were devoted to

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art, and among other galleries we visited the 'Wirtz' gallery, in Brussels. Have you been there?"

"Oh! yes," said Cyril. "I well remember those painted nightmares."

"Yes, some of the pictures are nightmares, but many are remarkable in other ways. Do you remember one called 'After Death?' A figure in gray, vaporous garments is floating up through Space—his body lying below him, and his face is a wonderful portrayal of mysterious knowledge. He seems to see into the beyond."

"Yes, I remember that face, and how it haunted me."

"That night we returned late from the Opera. I lay for a long time restless, thinking over the events of the day. That picture fascinated me, and falling asleep, its mysterious power followed me into the land of dreams. I dreamt that I was the departing soul of that picture, and that it was my body stretched below. A long life lay behind me, faint and far-away. The strongest impression I then had of

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that life, was pain. I remembered a home where my life was swayed by both good and evil impulses; where I had loved, and had lost those I loved, and where I had suffered, and was glad, much as other men. Religious belief had not been an important factor in my life, and above all, what seemed to me then intelligent research, had served to stunt that upward growth which is the divine tendency of every human soul.

“Then in my retrospection, I saw myself an old man. My blood flowed less swiftly, my steps grew uncertain, and I knew that soon I should pass through the gates of Death, into the untrodden realms beyond. At last I lay on a bed of pain. Old interests fell away from me, and I partly regained the faith I had as a child. As I laid there, I wondered what and where I should awaken at the moment my soul should leave its home of human flesh, and whether it would miss its old companion, and feel its way like a child into Eternity, with uncertain steps and groping intelligence. Would the Christ

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be there, and would I know Him, or had He, too, been but an ideal of the human mind?

“The supreme moment came. There was weeping and grieving about me—a final agony, and—I lived!

“I was hurrying through trackless Space, the wide Universe seemed all my own, and in that immensity and profundity, I was alone with the responsibility of my soul.”

The priest rose and stood before his listener, his head bared to the rising sun, with features glowing as with an inspiration. Cyril sat with hands tightly clasped, and eyes fixed in rapt attention—lost to everything in the fascination of his eloquence.

Still standing, he continued, “Soon from immeasurable heights and depths a sound of unutterable sadness floated around me, like the sighs of countless souls. A murmuring as of helpless woe burdened the air, which I now perceived was thronged with other shades. They moved on with anxious faces, their eyes fixed on a golden light beyond. This light shone with



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great brilliancy, but, fell not upon us. Some rays of its vivid splendor stretched down to Earth in the form of a cross. I drew near one of these shades.

“ ‘Where can I find Him?’ I asked. He looked on me with inscrutable eyes.

“ ‘He is yonder in the light,’ he replied.

“ ‘Can I not go to Him?’ I asked again.

“ ‘No, we cannot reach Him, till we lose all earthly taint.’

“ I knew then that the sighing was the long and unavailing regret for lost opportunities, and I, remembering my own lost chances for gaining that Kingdom, sighed too. Alas! that terrible remorse. It burned within me as I hurried on and on, seeking some spot in those wide heavens, where I could for a time forget.

“ But hope did not quite desert me. That shining cross stretched down to Earth was a bow of promise. Above the thunders of the Universe, music, grand yet tender reached me—songs of triumphant thanksgiving and exaltation. These glorious harmonies came from

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glistening beings who were coming and going in the midst of that shining splendor. Their faces I could not see for the brightness, but always that sound of echoing triumph. It fell on my saddened spirit with soothing promise. I was cheered, uplifted. The divine spark within me glowed with quickened resolution.

“Oh! why had I not cherished that light? Why had I allowed trivial things of life to dull its shining? Those years on earth were so short, and Eternity was so pitilessly long. For how many cycles should I know this dreary waiting, before I could fly to that Kingdom of Love.

“I awoke, my whole being seething with excitement. Those sights and sounds still bade me live no longer for self; to remember the inexorable law of retribution. I knew that as I lived on earth, so would my other life be. As I had the essence of God within me, I should try to live as a god.

“And it was thus I became a priest,” he said, after a pause. “Do you think me a visionary?”

## *“IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”*

“If you had been a visionary you would have regretted the step long ago, but I am sure you never have.”

“No! we never regret serving one we love.”

“I wish I could realize something of your idea of God,” she said. “My idea of Him is different from yours.”

“How different? How do you think of Him?” he asked.

“He has always been to me a tremendous power, but not so tender and loving as your dream would make Him. I think I could express myself better with my pen than in words. I always can.”

“Do so then, Miss Winthrop.”

“I will try,” she answered, rising.

“Then I know you will,” and for the first time he held out his hand to her for “good-bye.”

She left him to continue his walk and returned to the hotel. During the day she took out her folio containing many half written things in which her natural taste had found partial outlet, and determined to do her best for

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

a kind if able critic. After some thought she enclosed the following lines to him without comment.

O star-emblazoned canopy of God,  
Thou hid'st from mortal eyes His majesty,  
When in His power he walks high heaven  
To view His universe. When Time was born  
His finger touched our sphere to awful speed.  
The clash and roar of nature's forces He  
Has tuned to gentle, rythmic harmony,  
And from the heights of His omnipotence  
Beheld and bounded with His reaching eye  
Wide space! seen whirling worlds burn out their flight  
To lose themselves in void—Thus God is great.

At dinner a note was handed her. She instinctively knew from whom it came, and did not open it, but later she slipped into the deserted reading-room, and broke the seal.

"Dear Miss Winthrop," the note ran. "Your conception of God's greatness is admirable. Powerful and omnipotent He is, but above all, and over all, He is love. This love is as wide as the Universe, as deep as the sea. Perhaps these lines will help to make my meaning clear, and serve to complete what you have so well begun.

## *“IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.”*

O tiny insect, who with cunning care  
Spread'st out thy frail and fairy threads to build  
Thyself a home, who taught thee thy wise art?  
'Twas the same God, who with most tender care  
Creates and guards the humblest life of earth,  
And in the depths of ocean's darkest cave  
Upholds each fragile frond of tide-swept fern.  
The essence of this life is but a tear;  
But not one falls unseen, unknown of Him.  
The ever-circling mantle of His love  
He wraps around us—guides each faltering step.  
The shadow of His wing casts cooling shade  
On life's bare burning sands.—Thus God is love.

“Sincerely yours,  
“MAURICE GASTON.”

## Chapter V

"Oh! God, take my heart, for I cannot give it to Thee. Keep it for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself.—*Fenelon*.

"**B**RING the white shawl, John. I'll wait here."

Cyril stood at the water edge at the foot of the garden. The twinkling lights suspended among the cocoa palms, threw shafts of red and yellow color across the masses of shrubbery. An occasional figure flitted along the paths, but the scented silence was only broken by the distant boom of waves and the rustle of leaves in the dusky recesses of the garden.

Cyril leaned over the water. Against a background of blurred stars a radiant image smiled up at her—gleaming neck and arms, white, like pearl in the shimmering waters. She was to lead a Cotillion at one of the cottages that evening, the last in her well-beloved Palm Beach.

## *“IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”*

The breezes stirred her airy draperies as she stood there.

“Yes, you are drowned, Cyril Winthrop?” she whispered. “All your egotisms and vanities are quite drowned. I shall leave you here alone with the stars. Ah! you need not smile and shake your head at me, foolish girl. They call you fair, I know, but I have learned that one must be good and wise as well as fair. I leave you here, my old self, and go back to the world with higher ambitions.”

With an impulsive gesture the girl plucked a rose from those at her breast, and tossed its petals upon her reflection.

“See I scatter those leaves over you my old self—They are for—”

She paused, and turned with a start, for mirrored beside her own face under the floating rose-leaves was the face of the priest.

“Ah!” she exclaimed, “I began to fear you were not coming to say ‘good-bye.’ But what has happened?” she asked, as she saw his pale, grave face.

## AMONG THE PALMS

“ I see it is hardly the proper time to speak of such a subject, but I wanted you to know that Hannah Deal died this afternoon. Your name was almost the last on her lips, and she asked me to bring you this.”

He handed Cyril the little brown crucifix. The girl took it with quivering lips.

“ You believe she is happy, Father Gaston, do you not? ” But he did not reply. His face was an enigma. Was it a feeling of repulsion at the girl’s frivolous aspect in her ball gown, or was his human heart stirred by the vision of beauty and tenderness? Did he picture his life as it might have been, strengthened and enriched by the sympathy of a noble woman? It was but a moment and he replied—

“ Yes, I believe it. And you—you are happy too, are you not—quite happy? ”

“ Oh! yes, of course I must be happy,” she said, with an effort at a smile. “ But without your guidance I fear I shall fall from grace.”

“ God forbid,” he replied earnestly. “ Say often this little prayer of Fenelon’s in the midst



## *“IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN”*

of your pleasures. ‘Oh! God, take my heart, for I cannot give it to Thee. Keep it for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself.’ Keep the cross, it will remind you—”

“Did you think I was never coming?” said John Nesbitt gaily, as he joined them. “Good evening, Father Gaston—I am glad to see you before we leave. But you will go with us as far as the house, won’t you. We can talk on the way. Come Cyril, here are our bicycle chairs.”

“Father Gaston asked me if I was happy, John,” the girl said, after leaving the priest.

“And what did you tell him, dear?”

“I told him I was, of course,” she answered. “How could I be otherwise?”

But that evening, as she floated about, laden with flowers, smiling and radiant, a pain was on her heart, where the cross lay.



JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN' "



FORT SAN MARCO AND SEA WALL





# JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN' "

*A mythical truth of St. Augustine*

## Chapter I

“ I TOLE yer, I seed it wid mine own eyes, and heard it a-snortin’, an a-lashin’ ob its tail t’rough de water like it wus a cussin’. It war right off de ole Fort, an I a-sittin’ on de wall. Dat it war a sho’ nuff sea-sarpen’ I knows es well as dat chile Wash’nton knows I’s its fader.”

The “chile” referred to stood a shining instance of filial credulity, one hand as far in his mouth as possible, the other holding up its scant apparel, disclosing a pair of knees in sculptured ebony. But finding himself the subject of solemn declamation before an awe-inspiring assembly, and probably with the memory of recent and decided impressions that he had indeed a father’s authority liable to be shown again at any moment, the dusky cherub

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

forthwith uncorked his mouth and with "eyes in fine frenzy rolling," emitted a howl of terror.

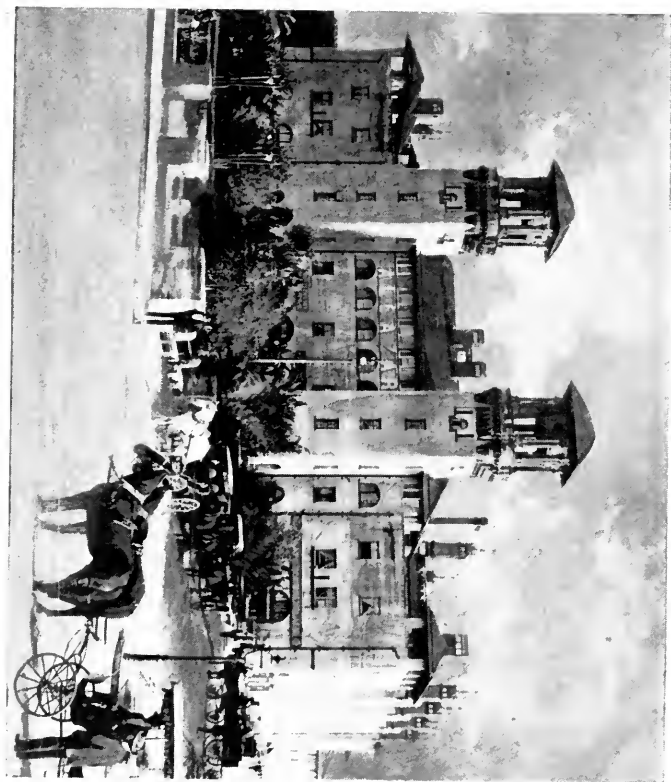
"Lor' sakes, Julib, don't scar' de chile," exclaimed Ophelia, its mother, as the child buried its head, ostrich-like, among her skirts, to avert the threatened danger.

Julib blinked defiance on his circle of auditors, a grotesque group in the fire-lit cabin. A dozen men and women sat round the blaze, their heads rolling from side to side as they gave vent to admiring chuckles, their attention divided between Julib's eloquence, and the odoriferous hoe-cakes upon the hearth.

In a shadowy corner sat two old men, Deacon Jones and Brudder Williams, their heads close together. They seemed to feel the suspicion of glances thrown toward them and moved uneasily, their angular figures casting ugly shadows on the wall behind them.

"Yo' needn't be a noddin' ob yo' heads, yo' two," cried Ophelia, with an ireful wag of her turbaned head. "Yo' all knows Julib hab a tongue ob truth. Yo' jest wait till yo' heah de





THE ALCAZAR



## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

whole ob de story, 'fore yo' turns inter doubtin' Thomasses."

Silence fell on the circle. Washington with legs wide apart stood before the narrator.

"Wal, my frends," said Julib, arranging his scarlet necktie with a preparatory flourish, "it happened disser way. Yo' all knows ob' de important position I hab es de dish-washer at de *Alcazar*, an' dat I'se a man ob great desponsibilities, an' dat I ain't no fule ob a chicken. Don' yo'?"

"Yes! yes! we all knows," came from several mouths.

"Wal, night 'fore las', I wus sittin' on de slopin' wall ob de ole Fort neah de water, a smokin' an' a cogitatin', when off ter de right I sees a line a movin' on de water. Dey warn't no moon, so I couldn't see berry clar, but dat line got nearer an' nearer, an' bigger an' bigger, an' soon I discubbered it war a livin', movin' bein', wat hab a mind ob its own. At first, I warn't particular interested, an' kep on a squashin' ob de gnats when all on a sudden I

## AMONG THE PALMS

seed right afore me de great sarpen' himself, wid coils an' an awful mouf, I tell yo'. Lawd! It would a made a Injine's hair ter gin ter curl tight ter seed dat ere beast.

"Dere was kind ob humps cum out ob de water, w'at was de coils, an' de snortin's an' de roarin's wus like de furnace blasts ob Hell. It was cummin' nearer 'n nearer, makin' dose awful sounds, an' a tearin'. I could see its tail a lashin' ob de water like de new fangled washin' machine et my 'otel.

"I wus dat scared, dat all I could t'ink ob wus de Lawd's Prayer, but dat didn't obstruct dat animal's onward course. It was a commin' straight fur me—nearer an' nearer, till—till, I could see its red mouf', and dat its body war a quarter ob a mile long, sartin' sho'.

"I wus so stuck ter dat wall by fright you'd a thought I'd tuck root dar. It could a gobbled me down its froat like an oyster but I thought ob my dish-washin', an' Phelia an' Washin'ton, an' by a cummidigious effort I tore myself from dat wall, and moved fur hum.

"Dey ain't no need fer yo' to tell me der

## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

aint no sea sarpen's, fur dere's one a-roostin' in dis berry harbor, now—and wedder it 'el go browsin' roun' on de lan' seekin' w'at it may devour, only de good Lawd knows. It could crunch an' eat dis 'ere cabin an' all yo' folks in it, if it tuk a likin' fur a meal."

Julib paused and glanced about the circle as an audible shudder and chatter of teeth passed round. The two bent figures in the corner crouched together, their whitened, woolly heads nodding in unison like dusky mandarins.

A sudden cry of dismay from Washington was heard, and it was discovered that he had sat down in an unexpected fashion on the hoe cake. As his mother jerked him off, low mutterings were heard about "makin' him hotter yit."

This episode broke the silence. Deep breaths were drawn, feet were shuffled and pipes re-lit to bring back a feeling of security by familiar sensations. An old woman with a high squeaking voice was the first to speak, between her whiffs of bad tobacco.

"'Pears like Julib hab seen de wonders of

## AMONG THE PALMS

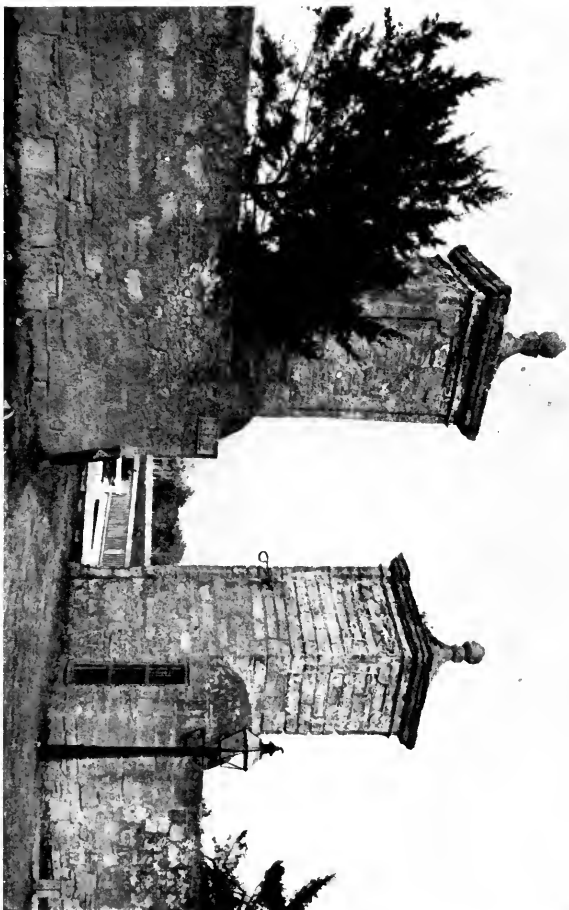
natur' sho' nuff. P'r'aps it mought been de debbil in pusson. W'at yo' tink Deacon?" to Ophelia's father.

One of the figures in the corner came out into the circle of fire-light, his wizened face wearing the cynical smile of a Voltaire.

"Dat dere is a debbil," he began, "we all knows, fer we has wrastled wid him. But es 'fur sea-sarpen's, dey ain't a common breed, least-wise roun' dere 'ere parts. I'se lived 'bout t'ree times es long as dis son-in-law ob mine, an' ain't seed no sich roarin' beasts es he tells ob. If dey is a wanderin' roun' loose, why ain't I seed em? though," with sarcastic emphasis, "I warn't in de habit ob spendin' my nights a loafin' an' a slappin' ob gnats, wid my wife and brats ter hum. Dey is circumstances, I 'low, when a man will see sarpen's an' pink debbils an' sich like in his head, w'at don't happen ter be outside ob it."

A murmur of dissent arose, and Julib sprang to his feet. From the dim corner came a derisive laugh, and another shadow on the wall

OLD CITY GATES







## *JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"*

sprang suddenly up to the ceiling as Brother Williams, the Deacon's friend and secret rival, rose, brandishing his stick.

"I'se 'fraid dat de Deacon es more onsart'in ob de spiritual debbil den he be ob der sea-sarpen', fur I heah his religion hab been getting a little cool ob late. He wus a shakin' wid feah a minit ago; I felt him. If he don't hab no trust in sarpen's why didn't he train his darter Phelia mo' ter his own notions? Yo' b'lieve in 'em sho', don' yo' gal?"

He sank back into the shadows with a triumphant cackle, glancing at the terror-stricken Ophelia.

With memories of past tilts with his rival in his mind, and their attendant discomforts, the deacon hastened to pour oil on the water his taunts had troubled.

"Wal, wat's de use ob discussin' dese matters. If it's de Lawd's will fur us ter reach de Golden City by de straight and narrer way ob dat sarpen's gullet, we'se got ter trabel dat way. I'd rader be swallowed whole, dan be kicked in-

## AMONG THE PALMS

ter Heaben by a mule like our deah departed Brudder Shadd who we buried las' week."

The old woman leaned forward with interest.

"Jes'so! Jes'so!" she said, and getting excited, "Gone ter Heaben—gone ter glory, with der cherubins an' de paraffines. Glory! glory! Take him, Lawd! I'se a comin'—comin', glory, glory!"

Her voice was drowned by Brother Williams's, whose sonorous tones filled the cabin, for he disapproved the impression the Deacon's eloquence was making.

"Hit's a pity dat after hundreds ob years ob experience 'mong pussons ob color, dat our deah departed brudder shouldn't er know better dan ter approach dat animal from de rear. Yes," he continued, his eyes twinkling, "and I wus at de berryin' service. Somebody put a nickel in a hat ter start de collection fur de po' widder, an' after goin' all roun' it cum back empty, He! he!"

A general laugh shook the frail shanty, to the great disturbance of two drowsy chickens

## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

perched on a rafter above. But this hilarity was brought to a sudden end by the Deacon's stick rapping smartly on the floor.

"My frens'," he drawled solemnly, "it don' befit yo' ter laff at no sich wickednesses. Dere's a' sponsibility ob five cents a-floatin' among dat congregation somewhar'. Look out dat it ain't 'mong us."

With a significant glance at his rival he moved towards the door.

"I's a goin'—am yo' comin' my way, Brud-der Williams? Yes? den it will be 'spectable for us to go togedder."

He patronizingly pulled the wool of the sleeping Washington, and with a dignified "good ebenin'" to the others, clattered out, followed by Brother Williams.

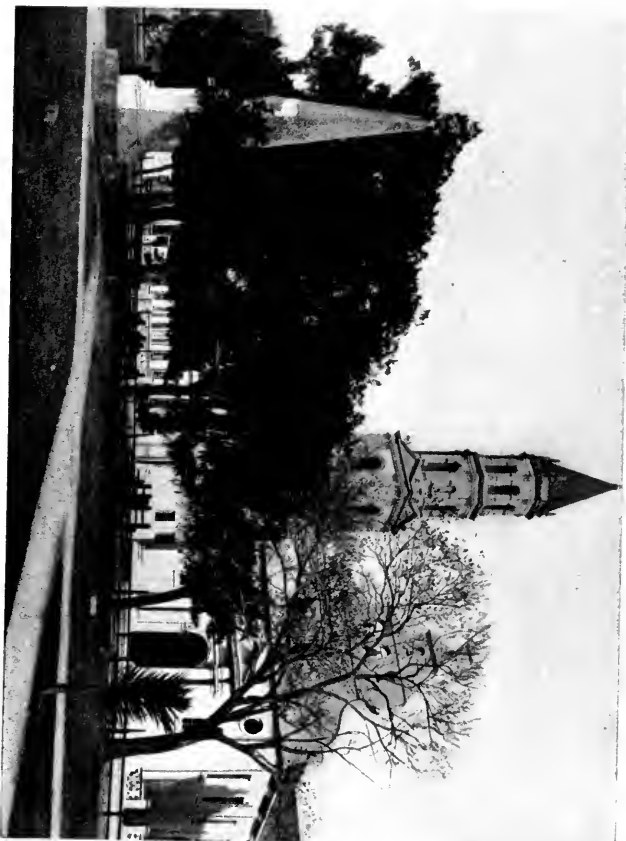
## Chapter II

THE narrow roadway bordered by cabins, was silent and deserted. As they passed the white-washed "meetin' house" they paused. The closing verse of a hymn sung with all the fervor and passion of a negro "revival," drifted through the open windows.

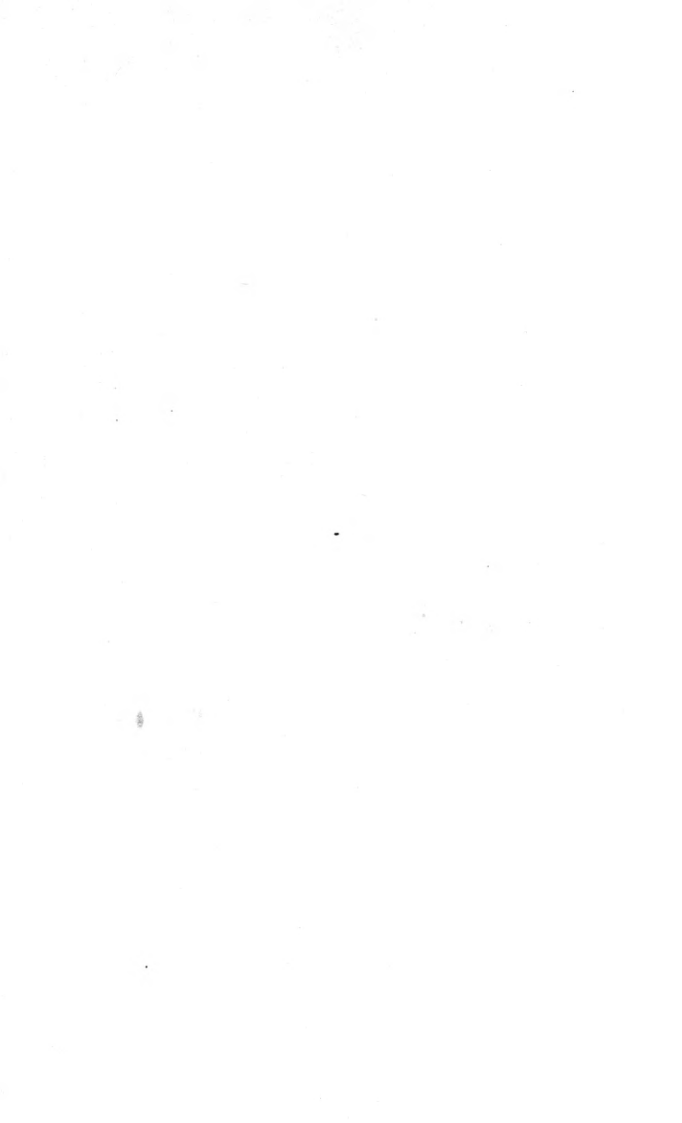
"We're a-rollin'—we're a-rollin'—  
We're a-rollin' through dis sinful worl'—  
We're a-rollin'—we're a-rollin'—  
We're a-rollin' home ter God."

They stood arm in arm, the old Deacon beating time with his long foot on the sand. Perhaps something in the stirring melody subdued their egotism, for as they moved among the pine shadows, each leaned on the other with more affectionate and familiar ease.

Nothing was said for some time, until, on turning a corner, a dog rushed out on them with sudden barking. Both started to run, then paused trembling, looking at one another.



CATHEDRAL AND PLAZA



## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

"Yo' don' b'lieve in dat trash ob Julib's 'bout de sea-sarpen', do yo' Brudder?" asked the Deacon in a somewhat shaky voice, as they continued their way.

"Course not!" was the scornful reply, given with a shrinking glance toward the lonely road ahead. "Julib means well, but he do tell sich tales. Bress yo' sole, Deacon, if I t'ought dere wus sich a beast I'd go an' look fur him. If we'd look long 'nuff, we'd see him, sho'."

"Is yo' gwine ter look?" asked the Deacon, with sudden suspicion for the sincerity of his companion's scepticism.

"Do yo' take me fur a fule?" exclaimed Brother Williams. "Do yo' t'ink I'd sit a-roostin' all de night on dat sea-wall a waitin' fur roarin' beasts w'at nebber did lib nohow? Sho'! I'se too ole fur enny sich foolerin' es dat. Ere yo' gwine fur ter look?"

"Me!" exclaimed the Deacon. The derisive scorn of the answer convinced Brother Williams that there was no such possibility.

Each longed at the bottom of his heart to

## AMONG THE PALMS

know if such a creature did exist, and to see it if it did. What glory to tell of it to the other! The Deacon thrilled with the delightful possibility. How much better than Julib he would describe the grewsome details of that mysterious creature, if he could but see it. For once he might enter a realm of knowledge where Brother Williams could not follow, and confound his rival with his own marvelous experience. Oh! if he could only have one glimpse of "dat sarpen'," for that it existed he began to have no doubt. Wild ideas and plans floated through his brain.

Meanwhile Brother Williams hobbling through the sand, was also burning with awakening ambition. That Julib had spoken the truth he had not for a moment doubted, but fear of the Deacon's ridicule had made him deny any such belief. With sly caution and an instinctive mistrust of his friend's sincerity, he had a half-formed plan to see this monster of the sea for himself. If he could but corroborate his son's statement, and relate new horrors



## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN'"

of his own experience! The blissful anticipation of being a conspicuous narrator while the Deacon should sit neglected in a corner, gave him exquisite pleasure. He could with difficulty refrain from executing a double-shuffle in the middle of the road.

Both men were so engrossed in their own thoughts, that little more was said till they bade each other good-night at the Deacon's "clear-in'." They parted with great magnanimity, their hearts mellowed with the prospect of anticipated triumph.

Brother Williams scurried home, shying at shadows and rustling jasmine vines, to his cabin half a mile farther.

The Deacon entered his house and tied his door firmly with a bit of twine.

## Chapter III

THE following night a heavy fog rolled in from the sea. It crept along the narrow streets, through sleepy gardens, and swathed itself about the motionless palms, till St. Augustine in its gray veiling looked like a city among the clouds.

Brother Williams, his legs stretched out to the imaginary warmth of a pile of ashes in his fire-place, sat lost in thought, his head sunk forward on his breast. All was still save the occasional rustle of Pete, the dog, aroused from slumber to attend to a dream-disturbing flea. Through the open window the fog drifted, blurring the outlines of the tiny cabin, and covering its bareness with a friendly veil.

Brother Williams at last rose with a profound sigh, and moving to the door, peered cautiously out. His cabin stood in its acre of "clearin'," the only sign of human life. A group of tall pines with their scanty foliage away at their tops, were like gawky boys grown



THE PONCE DE LEON



## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

"too big for their clothes." Mysterious chirps and rustles came from the scrub palmettos, whose sharp leaves seemed to point like derisive fingers at the solitary watcher.

With a searching glance this way and that, Brother Williams crept softly back into the house. The dog rose. "Yo' jest be still Pete. Don' yo' be fur snuffin' yo' nose into t'ings w'at ain't yo' perfession."

With slow caution he got into a great coat which fell in ragged luxuriance to his heels. With many a nervous glance and pause he went out, latching the gate softly behind him, and passed down the road.

Entering the town, he scurried past the brilliantly lighted *Ponce de Leon*, keeping in the shadow of garden walls as much as possible, and dodging around the groups of colored men loitering on the corners. He crossed the Plaza, and reaching the sea-wall, paused. He fancied he heard steps behind him on the stone coping, but could see nothing for the mist. After listening intently he went on.

## AMONG THE PALMS

“ It’s doin’ ob de secret t’ings dat makes us scart,” he thought. “ Dere ain’t nobody a keep-in’ step wid me fur fun on sich a night as dis’ nohow.”

Everything was still. The ripple of the water below him was the only sound his anxious ears could now hear. He went steadily on to the Fort, and around the sloping wall to its farthest extremity. Wrapping his cloak well around him, he sat down, with eyes fixed on the narrow strip of beach and water discernible through the mist on the left of the Fort.

If the gulls had been awake, they would have seen a few moments later, a second figure emerge from the fog with stealthy tread. Like a cat in search of prey, the Deacon crept along the Fort wall, his old shoes making no sound on its hard surface. Not a hundred feet from Brother Williams he paused, and peered triumphantly about him. No sign of human life about. He was alone to discover—what?

He shivered slightly as he seated himself. Those gray, mysterious depths of mist and sea

## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

might hide untold horrors. He shrank back from the edge near the water, and got as far up on the shelving wall, as its width permitted.

For a long time the two daring spirits sat there motionless, the mist dripping from their battered hats, and running in little streams down their cavernous wrinkles. Now and then the young moon would peer for a moment upon them, to be lost again in the moving vapor.

"I'se a courageous man," said the Deacon to himself. "Yo' wouldn't ketch dat white-livered Brudder Williams in no sich purdigriement nohow. He's a stuffin' hisself no doubt at dis berry minnit wid Phelia's hoe-cake, wid no mo' care fur science than dat brat Washington."

Brother Williams at the other end of the wall, stirred uneasily, trying to find the soft side of its clam-shell surface.

"It wouldn't be no sich man as de Deacon," he thought, "ter be out heah a sarchin' fur troof. Jes' won't I make dat wool ob hissen

## AMONG THE PALMS

stan' up wid s'prise, when I tells him w'at I seen. He be allers soundin' de loud timbral fur his own smartnesses, but he'd be narvious, he would. I don' scar' a demnition bit, I don't."

A toad hopping along came in contact with his hand. He barely stifled a scream.

"I 'low es dat did s'prise me a little," he muttered. "It wur fur usin' a cussin' word, I specs."

The minutes dragged slowly by. They seemed hours to the two men of science. They grew more damp and more cold and were decidedly nervous.

"If I's fuled," said the Deacon to himself, "dat cowerlin Brudder Williams 'll nebber know, an' if I isn't—!" The delightful possibility of surpassing his rival, sent a glow through his trembling frame.

All at once both men gave a start. Off to the right a sound was heard: faint, but still a sound. A wheezing, gasping, gurgle came across the water, accompanied by dull splashing. The Deacon's breath stopped, he felt he was about to stifle.



## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

"Hit's it!—hit's it!" he gasped, with shaking limbs.

Brother Williams felt his blood congeal.

"Dat's de noise es Julib done told 'bout, but I ain't scart, no I ain't." He rose with shaking knees and peered into the mist.

The noise grew louder—it seemed to fill the air, his ears, his brain, with a confused horror of sound. It resembled the snorts and breathings of some terrible monster. No such sound had either of them ever heard before. No lights were visible, so it could not be a vessel of any kind—and what vessel ever made such a noise!

The Deacon was now beside himself with terror. He longed to cry out, to escape, but power of motion and spirit had left him.

Brother Williams, torn between abject fear and curiosity, knelt on the edge of the wall with a pair of trembling hands raised to heaven.

"Oh! Lawd, I'se a sinner, a po' weak sinner; but oh! good, kind Lawd, let me see it. Yo' let John see de Rebelations. Oh! keep me—oh glory, glory, o-o-o-o-h—h—h—h!"

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

The horrid noise was almost below him—he saw the hideous coils, the tossing head through the mist. With one yell of ungovernable terror, he turned and fled. Blind and dizzy with horror, he sped along the wall to be sent tumbling prostrate over the Deacon. With a mingled yell of dismay they grappled and rolled over and over, each ignorant of what or who was the other. At that moment the moon looked down, and they shook themselves apart.

“Yo’ Deacon”! gasped Brother Williams, glaring at his foe.

“Yes! yes! it’s me. Oh! w’at is it? oh! oh!”

He clung trembling to his companion, who now, with his rival there before him, felt some small courage return.

The two old men clung to each other and crept slowly toward the noise. The terrible monster had passed the Fort, moving toward the beach at the left. They crept, step by step, to the point in the wall, both beginning to feel partially secure, when suddenly a snort of pro-



HOTEL CORDOVA



## JULIB'S "SEA-SARPEN"

digious strength caused them to jump as though shot.

A whirling of water, and another snort. They were both about to cast science to the winds and fly ignominiously, when the mist lifted, disclosing, not fifty feet away—five horses emerging in single file from the water, shaking their dripping flanks, and then walking calmly across the beach.

The two men turned and faced each other with mingled wrath and shame.

"Es fur yo', Brudder Williams, yo' mus' feel mighty like a sheep ter be makin' sich a screechin' fuss 'bout a few po' horses swimmin' home from de island. Here wus I," his voice rising in virtuous indignation, "a sittin' quiet an' peaceable-like, a composin' my experience speech fur ter-morrow's meetin', when yo' comes a gallopin' along like a boltin' lion, a-knockin' me ober, an' actin' like Balaam's ass. Yo' is a noodlin' fule, I'se bressed if yo' ain't."

"Yo' tell me, Deacon, dat yo' wus sittin' hear speechifyin'! Go 'long wid sich lyin'. Yo'

## AMONG THE PALMS

roostin' in dis hear wet! Tell dat story ter de ole women-folks. I ain't no chicken ter be filled wid no sich stuffin'. So yo' t'ink I bin scart! I done seed yo' sittin' hear all de time, an' knowed yo's bin watchin' fur dat sarpen'. Yes, I jess done dat screechin' ter scar' yo'. An' I done gone and done it too, sartin'. He! he! ha! ha! ha!"

Brother Williams broke into a feeble cackle and turned homeward. He not only felt shaky about his knees, but feared his imagination might fail if called upon to do more lying.

At the "experience meetin'" the following evening, these two brave men sat very far apart, and had no experience to relate. It was noticed however that they prayed at each other with unusual fervor.

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[The Sea-serpent illusion, as described in the above story, was actually experienced by Mr. W. H. P., a winter resident of St. Augustine, when visiting the Fort on a cloudy evening.]

# THE END OF AN EARLDOM





# THE END OF AN EARLDOM

*Nassau.*

## Chapter I

THE occasion of my first meeting Lady Gladys was in this wise. I was stopping with my friend Maxwell Keith, an Americanized Scotchman, upon the semi-tropical island off the coast of Georgia, which he had purchased for a winter home with a game-stocked Park, as much like the ideal English seat as possible. He was a younger son whose sole patrimony had been a vigorous physique and a splendid energy, and with these he came to America, where ten years among iron manufacturers had secured him a handsome fortune, and had also lessened his veneration for the decaying and idle upper classes of England.

He spent his summers in Scotland, and his old friends there raised their eyebrows at his generous American fashion of presenting vari-

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

ous towns with Public Libraries, and were still more open in their displeasure when he announced his views upon the education of the lower classes. Meanwhile he entertained his friends lavishly on both sides of the water: carried them about on four-in-hands and in steam yachts, and was, in short, a delightful and forcible advertisement for the success of American industries.

His luxurious island home was a charming mingling of English form and American convenience, and here for the time being he dreamed himself a country squire of good old English style but without the climatic discomforts of "the tight little isle." This winter he had a dozen friends to bear him company—among them Mr. Kenby, a prominent politician, Mr. Ruddrow, a newly arisen novelist who said sharp things, and the usual professional beauty. There was also an amateur actor of classic profile, to relieve the tedium of possible dull weather.

After a fortnight of shooting and explora-

## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

tion of the beautiful island, our energetic host suggested that a cruise on the steam yacht lying idly in the little harbor, would be a pleasant diversion. The idea was hailed with delight. The women were quickly prepared, while the men provided themselves liberally with fishing tackle, not forgetting a generous supply of cigars and champagne, and we sailed merrily away for the sunny waters of the South.

Our objective point was Nassau, but we lingered along the Florida coast with its flat stretches of wind-swept marshes, and backgrounds of grim pines. We ran twenty or thirty miles up the St. John's river, fishing in its placid waters, or, anchored at pleasure in the numerous inlets, we idled away the hours, watching the pink and gray cranes, standing in one-legged stateliness under the vine tangled palmettos.

The women of our party, having heard of the social gaieties at Nassau, presently had enough of this idyllic life, so bowing to their decree, we wound up our reels and were soon

## AMONG THE PALMS

steaming under the frowning ramparts of Fort Fincastle.

The sky line of the quaint little city, with its towers and Cathedral campanile, was losing itself in the yellow glow of a setting sun. Sounds of martial music floated across the water from the evening Parade at the Garrison. Sailboats of all sizes laden with parties of young people were being poled in by their skippers, with sails hanging limp about the masts.

On the morrow began a different life for our party. There was golf, riding and bathing by day, and dancing every evening, with occasional dinners among the residents. The contrasts of the place were curious—a mixture of almost theatrical prettiness and nineteenth century smartness. If King George could but traverse these narrow streets; see the electric lights swung from corner to corner, or look in upon a “hop” at the *Victoria Hotel*, how astounded that monarch would be at such innovations. And all with never a “by your Majesty’s leave.”



FORT FINCASTLE



## THE END OF AN EARLDOM

One afternoon, the rest of our party having departed in congenial couples to the Queen's staircase, golf links and quaint Grant town, I took a boat for a row and quiet pipe.

Leaving the gay little town behind me, I rowed by the Fort toward a stretch of lonely marshes which looked invitingly quiet. For a while I could find no water-way to their midst, but after some hard pulling a narrow creek came into view. This I followed with no special purpose except a whim to get as far away as possible from everything and everyone. Gray sand dunes, blown by the wind into fantastic shapes, stretched away on every side, broken by spaces of brown grass over which gulls wheeled with plaintive cries. Far away to the right, I could hear the surf booming, but here not a ripple stirred the waters, save when insect wings touched its placid surface, or a crane started up from the tufts of salt grass.

I rowed on and on, taking no thought of time, with only a happy sense of *bien être*, until

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

I was aroused from my somnambulent mood by an obstacle ahead.

A causeway stretched across the entire breadth of my vision from the forest on the extreme left, to what appeared a thickly wooded island or else a promontory of the main land, on my right. No sign of human life disturbed the perfect quiet. I left the boat, and climbed to the top of the causeway. Beyond, the marshes stretched away in flat monotony. No tracks of wheels or footsteps were visible upon the causeway, but the center was worn in a narrow track by horses' feet. My curiosity was now fully awakened. I pulled the boat high out of water and started for the island.

It was the forest primeval into which the track led me. Grass grew breast high, with no reminder of the scythe. To the left the old paths were almost obliterated by tangled undergrowth. It was a wilderness beautiful in Nature's own prodigality. I pushed my way through vine and bracken with curious expect-



## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

tancy, as though a haunted castle and sleeping princess lay hid in this mazy woodland.

Suddenly I heard a childish voice close to me crooning a lullaby. I pushed aside some brushwood, and there in a little opening among the ferns sat a child rocking a doll to and fro in her arms. She was sitting at the foot of a giant palmetto, whose roots protruding from their earth covering stretched in all directions. Between these roots the child had placed toy tables and chairs made from bits of bark and sticks. Flowers were stuck here and there as decoration for her idyllic house. Suddenly she gave her doll a shake.

“You tiresome child!” she said, “Why won’t you go to sleep? You must be very happy to be so forever smiling. Grandpa says only the dead are happy. Perhaps you’re dead.”

She became conscious of a strange presence, and turned toward me one of the loveliest child faces I have ever seen. It was oval in shape

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

and very small, made more so by the great violet eyes which looked straight into mine with innocent astonishment. A mass of curls framed the face. She was clad in a frock of rough gray serge, much too short for her, fastened by white bone buttons. But this small person was in no way disconcerted by her unexpected visitor. She clasped her doll closer.

“Do you want to find your way to the house?” she asked. “It is straight on, but you know grandpa doesn’t receive visitors.”

I replied that I was not in search of the house or her grandfather, in fact supposed I was the only person about. Her mouth broke into a laugh; then, as though fearing I might feel the awkwardness of my position, the child grew politely grave.

“I am Lady Gladys Cope,” she said, “and my grandfather is Lord Carnsforth and lives here. I take care of him.” To say I was astonished but mildly expresses my feelings, as I gazed at the tattered little princess before me. I had met here and there in my western trips

## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

some titles among the numerous younger sons of English aristocracy who had been driven there by necessity, and even in southern Florida I had run against a self-exiled Duke, but had heard nothing of this distinguished exile. I apologized to the best of my ability for having trespassed, but she interrupted me.

“I am very glad to see you, and think you are a very nice person. But you must be tired; won't you sit down?”

With regal air she motioned me to a mossy stump, and resuming her position, smoothed down her doll's scanty petticoats.

I was warm and tired, and very willing to rest for a while with so unique a companion. She was voluble, and we chatted on, much to our mutual gratification. We soon became good friends. She explained to me the mysteries of her housekeeping, and how the caterpillars were at times very troublesome in upsetting her furniture. She said this was her country house, her town house was in a distant field in a hay rick. I inquired politely for

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

her children's health and showed her how to make rabbits out of my pocket handkerchief. The sun was sinking and the woods growing chill, so I suggested that I should escort her home, and we pushed our way through the sun-reddened leaves. She chatted freely of her home and home life, as freely as only a child could who had never known what strangers were.

"Grandpa is very old," she said; "he and I live here quite alone with Allan and Tabby. They are the servants. You see Grandpa is very poor now, but he didn't use to be. We, that is, Mamma and Grandpa, came over here from England because our old home went to someone else. He bought this orange grove, but Mamma died, and all the trees died, so it left only me to take care of Grandpa. Tabby says if I had been a boy I would have been an Earl like he is, but I'm glad I wasn't, for I don't think Earls are happy people. Grandpa doesn't seem so."

By this time we had come in sight of the

QUEEN'S STAIRCASE





## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

house, and I shall never forget the beautiful desolation of the scene. The house, a long rambling structure of brick, with a sky line much broken by quaint chimneys, rose against the sky. It had evidently been the home of some wealthy Southern planter before the war, and in its day, luxurious to an unusual degree. Ivy clambered over doors and windows, some of which evidently had been closed for years, and wild vines ran riot to the very edge of the gabled roof. A wide piazza stretched along the front of the house, its decayed wooden steps leading to a garden choked with weeds. A wilderness of roses filled the air with their scent. The only sound of life was the sleepy splash of a dilapidated fountain, and the twittering of birds as they settled themselves to rest. As my small guide led me up the broken steps, I felt like some ghost come out of the dead past to revisit the scene of brilliant life and gaiety as dead and forgotten as myself. By the great central door at which we paused a rabbit nibbled the vines which covered the

## AMONG THE PALMS

lintel and seemed in nowise disturbed when Lady Gladys raised the knocker in both hands and woke the silence to resonant clamor. At last a step was heard and the door swung open, disclosing a wizened little man in rusty, black knickerbockers and buckled shoes.

"Ah! it is your ladyship." Then catching sight of my stalwart figure looked quickly from her to me.

"Allan, this is a gentleman I met in the woods," she explained. Then turning to me, "Please come in; I want to take you to grandpa."

But I hastened to excuse myself. "You forget that I have not the pleasure of knowing Lord Carnsforth," I said, "and doubtless he is not prepared to receive visitors."

"Oh, he will surely be glad to see you," she urged.

I took out my card. "Take this to him first," I said, "and then if he is willing, I should be delighted to meet him."

Like a flash she was gone, Allan shambling



## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

after her, leaving me in a great hall. I made out in the dim light a carved staircase of great beauty, and that everything was pervaded by an atmosphere of dreary disuse. Lady Gladys emerged from a dusky corner, flushed and breathless, and, following her beckoning finger, our footsteps on the hard and polished floor awakening uncanny echoes in the silence, she paused at an open door with finger on lip. From the light of a glass-stained window at the farther end I discerned a room of noble proportions. Midway between floor and ceiling a gallery ran round the room, the walls of which were lined with books. A smoldering fire gleamed from a cavern-like fireplace, and before this sat an old man in a wheel chair. A hound lay stretched at his feet.

“Saint Père,” she cried, “I’ve brought the gentleman.”

“It gives me great pleasure to meet any acquaintance of yours my darling,” Lord Carnsforth said, as he courteously tried to rise, but sinking back with a sigh of pain, motioned me

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to a seat. Lady Gladys perched herself on the arm of his chair and explained our meeting.

“I seldom meet anyone from the outside world,” he remarked, “and it is many years since I trod its highways myself, though I feel a strong admiration for your wonderful country of yours and its progressive people.”

I expressed my admiration for what I had seen of English life. “It shows nothing of that striving for effect that is the bane of our new world. Perhaps it is because you live so much in the country and are content with the world as your fathers left it. We are forever trying to better ourselves and circumstances, and I almost begin to think it a mistake.”

Lord Carnsforth leaned forward. “My dear sir, you are wrong there. It is that constant effort for what is better which has made you what you are—the greatest empire the world has ever seen. It is difficult for English gentlemen of the present generation to better their condition. I wish it were not so. The old idea of trade being ignoble has died its

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natural death and many would like to enter healthful business careers, but lack the knowledge to do so. I envy some of my old friends who have been able to face the loss of rents and strike out for themselves. My friend the Duke of Eastminster has made a great success of his London hansoms. You doubtless have heard of my straitened circumstances. For this little one's sake I wish I were younger. It is hard to sit in my chimney corner idle when heart and brain would so gladly make themselves useful."

"Lady Gladys told me something of her past life," I replied frankly. "But you have much left in so loving and charming a companion."

My heart ached for the pathetic pair of comrades. He, worn and spent from his unsuccessful battle with life and she so frail to commence the warfare.

"You see she is such a wild little bairn," he continued, "that I can do nothing better for her. She runs about in the sunshine much as the quail do, but she is an ever present comfort

## AMONG THE PALMS

and solace to me. I regret the uselessness of a life like mine."

"Why, Saint Père," the child broke in, "it is not true that you are useless. Have you not written all those splendid books the papers praise, and how could I live without you when I love you so?"

The eager voice seemed to break the sadness which had settled on us all. The old servant entered with lamps, and realizing the lateness of the hour I rose to leave. I expressed my pleasure at the chance which had brought me there.

Lord Carnsforth held out his hand in farewell, begging me to come again soon. "It has been like a breeze from your 'Rockies' to see you," he said.

Lady Gladys showed me to the door. And so I left her at the top of the steps, a gray little ghost in the evening mist.

## Chapter II

**O**N my return to the yacht, I joined my host who was having a smoke at the bow.

“Keith,” I said, throwing myself on the rug at his side, “did you ever hear in your country of Lord Carnsforth? I have recently heard of him as having a peculiar history.”

“Carnsforth,” he replied, “of course I have. His place, Carnsforth Heyes, is in the adjoining county to my summer home, and we frequently drive over the estate, as indeed everyone does, to see the remains of one of the finest seats in the Kingdom.”

“What was the cause of his misfortunes?” I asked.

“A scapegrace son,” said he. “The greatest gambler who ever disgraced his country at Monaco. He lost heavily at home on the turf and then his passion led him to Monte Carlo, where he sunk more than the entire value of

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the family estate. He then shot himself at the door of the Casino."

"Married, wasn't he?"

"Yes! He had married into the Cadogan family in the face of their bitter opposition—owing to his well-known character; in fact they never forgave the wife, and she has been compelled to share the Carnsforth misfortunes."

"What became of Carnsforth Heyes?"

"Creditors took possession, but out of respect to the Earl's age and troubles, they allowed him the use of three or four rooms during his life, and a pony chaise for driving about the Park. Frequently, while driving four-in-hand through his place, we have met, and I recalled the old saw about the 'whirligig of time.' The avenues of trees planted by his ancestors centuries ago, are one of the wonders of the country. Every ancient seat has its special feature, but those avenues of mammoth trees with their noble vistas are unequaled even in the Park at Windsor.

"But the old Earl's pride could not brook

## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

such a position long in his ancestral halls. His heart was broken, and in a few years he disappeared with his daughter-in-law and her child—it was said, to live in some retired village in France.”

## Chapter III

**A**FTER this conversation some days were spent in the usual round of mild dissipations at Nassau, but my mind wandered continually to my enchanted island. I had said nothing of my interesting episode, knowing that the idle folk would straightway wish to gratify their curiosity. One day a rain storm was sending the clouds scurrying across a sullen sky, and I decided to see my little princess again. I wanted to escape unquestioned and unnoticed. Most of the party were congregated at the Colonial Hotel, playing ping pong. Feeling I should not be missed, I donned a mackintosh and rowed off in the storm.

Nature was a study in brown and gray—sky, sand dunes and water, all were in one tone of colorless bleakness. I climbed the causeway, and after a rapid walk, reached the house. It looked more desolate than ever. The rain splashed on the moldy walks, whirled against





THE COLONIAL



## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

the walls in spasmodic fury, and fell in streams from the mossy eaves upon the weeds below. Rose leaves, whipped off by the wind, lay in red and pink drifts on every side.

I knocked vigorously, to be sent tumbling in by the wind over Lady Gladys, who had opened the door. She danced about with delight as I doffed my dripping garments, her golden head a veritable sunbeam in the grim hall.

“Oh! I knew you would come,” she cried. “I was just longing to see you and have watched for you all day.” Then her face grew grave; she pulled my face down to hers.

“I wanted to see you,” she whispered, “for grandpa has been acting so strangely. I’m sure something troubles him. Last night he moaned when he thought me asleep, and when I ran to him he said, ‘Nothing, child, only a bad dream.’”

We reached the room where Lord Carnsforth was sitting. A fire burned on the hearth, sending a rosy warmth about the room. By its light I saw he had aged since I last saw him.

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

When we had exchanged greetings he left the conversation to Lady Gladys. I drew a chair up to the hearth, the child leaning against me. He noticed this, and called her to him, and clasped her closely, looking gloomily at me over her sunny head. I tried different topics of conversation but in vain; the courteous host of my previous visit remained silent, looking moodily into the fire. At last Lady Gladys relieved my embarrassment by saying;—"Saint Père, I'm going to show him the house;" so we left the room he vouchsafing no reply.

When the door closed behind us she looked at me with trembling lips. "You see there is something," she said. "He has been that way for two days. Sometimes he seems quite to forget me, and just sits there and thinks, thinks. Then, again, he won't let me leave him even for an instant, and kisses me so hard it hurts."

She burst into a flood of tears. I sat down and drew the trembling little figure into my

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arms. That something had occurred I did not doubt.

“He is probably not well, Gladys,” I said. “You know when one is old, one is apt to have moods like that. Doubtless it will pass away like those clouds out there, and we’ll soon have the sun shining as brightly as ever.”

Gradually the sobs ceased, and the storm of grief subsided as quickly as it had come. So hand in hand we passed through several rooms whose web-covered windows let enough light through to show their bareness, and came to a once gaily decorated ball-room.

The stately drawing-room was quite empty of furniture except a few old-fashioned pieces—mute remnants of a once brilliant home. As Gladys was about taking me farther Allan appeared and announced tea, and I for one was glad to get back to the warmth and cheer of the fire.

Lord Carnsforth turned to the child. “My darling, you are not dressed; run and ask

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

Tabby to give you a better frock in honor of our guest." The child seemed surprised, but did as she was bidden. When her light foot-fall died away he roused himself and said:—

"You may be surprised that I should speak to you on a matter of so personal a nature, but I have a question to decide which involves the life and happiness of that child, and much suffering for her as well as for myself. I cannot refrain from soliciting the sound judgment and sympathy which I feel sure you will give me." His voice sank almost to a whisper. He shaded his eyes from the fire and continued:—

"You may have already learned of my unfortunate circumstances. I have reached my threescore years and ten, and my little Gladys will soon be left without a home. She loves me, and I had hoped to have that love spared me to the end, but I fear it is to be otherwise. Two days since I received a letter from a distant relative by marriage, the Hon. Mrs. Stretfield, a woman of position and wealth, offering to take Gladys, educate and provide for her on

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the condition"—the old man paused, as though to gather strength—"that I give her to her keeping immediately. She is now about seven, and these years have been comparatively wasted as far as conventional education is concerned. That she must leave me I begin to realize, but my love prevents me clearly appreciating the importance and advantage of the offer."

He leaned forward and gazed for a moment into a vacancy from which he returned with a suppressed shudder.

"I have not told Gladys yet. It is the want of a little human sympathy which has made me tell you this. The prospect of loneliness is terrible, and I pray God it may not be long. Sir, can you comprehend what it means for me? From her infancy she has been my all. Her laugh is my lost youth; her faintest sigh a keen pain to me. She may learn to forget, she is so young. It would be but natural, but the thought of it seems almost more than I can bear. The long days here alone, and still alone till the end." The quivering voice paused.

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

"Dear Lord Carnsforth," I said, "I am inexpressibly grieved by what you have told me, but it is the inexorable law that the old must surrender to the young. Were you to be taken from her, the shelter and care which are now offered would in all probability prove an immeasurable blessing. Besides she could sometimes come to you here, and you would constantly be informed of her growth and education."

He interrupted me with a feeble gesture. "You mistake there," he said, "I shall probably never see her. The family of the child's mother never approved of the marriage, and Mrs. Stretfield is on her side of the house. She takes Gladys for her mother's sake, not mine. But the child is coming—say nothing."

He relapsed into silence as Lady Gladys bounded into the room in her fresh white gown. She noticed neither Lord Carnsforth's silence nor my abstraction, but clambered into a high chair to pour tea. The firelight played on the little hands as they hovered over the shining



## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

silver and fragile old cups, and danced in fantastic shadows over the silent figure in the chair. The hound rose and pushed his nose into the nerveless hand, but got no answering caress.

## Chapter IV

"All things are transient.  
They being born have lived,  
And having lived are dead,  
And being dead are glad  
To be at rest."

*Inscription on an ancient Hindoo bell.*

A FEW days after, when starting for my morning swim, a note was handed me. It ran thus:—"Lady Gladys leaves in a few hours, and would bid her friend good-by.—*Carnsforth.*"

I found Lord Carnsforth sitting under a giant oak near the house, but very shrunken and enfeebled. Gladys was not there. Near him sat a handsome woman of about five-and-thirty. With an indescribable air of thorough breeding she turned her well poised head to acknowledge the introduction, and raised a lorgnette to her cool, gray eyes.

"I am very pleased to meet you," she said, with a slight drawl. "Lady Gladys has spoken of you."



VICTORIA HOTEL—NASSAU



## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

I told her of our unexpected meeting and her fine mouth parted in a low rippling laugh.

"She has not been so fortunate in meeting as many of your countrymen as I have," she replied.

"Just before leaving London I went out to dinner with quite an interesting American, a Mr. Bill—Mr. Buffalo Bill—I believe. He was from Arizona. Do you know him? He was, ah!—somewhat unusual."

With a suppressed smile I expressed my regret at not having that pleasure, that, in fact, I knew but few people in Arizona. Whether the woman was chaffing me or not I could not tell. Her thin mouth was smileless, and her drawl quite even. Just then a small figure coming down the terrace steps sent all thoughts of "Mr. Bill" out of my mind.

Such a pathetic vision as came toward us across the lawn. The face was as white as a drenched lily. Dark circles lay under the violet eyes, which looked from one to the other of us with dull uncertainty. The mouth was

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

folded into straight, sad lines. All bloom and youth seemed suddenly to have been crushed out of her. She went to Lord Carnsforth and leaned against him. For a moment no one spoke. Those two silent figures seemed to destroy even Mrs. Stretfield's well bred composure. At last I said:—

“Dear little Gladys, won't you come and speak to me?” She listlessly turned her head and gave me a limp hand. I lifted the wan little face till the lustreless eyes looked into mine.

“And so you are to leave us for the great world you once so longed to see. You will find many new friends there, but I feel that you will not forget the old ones. Perhaps we may meet some day when you will have grown to be a fine lady. I shall remind you of our first meeting under the beech tree and ask you if you remember how to make rabbits out of my pocket handkerchief.”

She did not even smile in response, but looked into my eyes as though no word had

## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

reached her. Lord Carnsforth stirred in his chair and she ran to him.

“My little bairn, will, I hope, become a noble woman,” he said in a faint voice. “I am sorry that I shall not be here to see her then.” For answer the child clasped his hand convulsively to her breast. Mrs. Stretfield leaned forward and said sweetly:—

“Gladys dear, it seems very hard to leave your home, I know, but your new life will be so full of other interest you will soon forget.”

The child turned on her with despairing fury. “Forget!” she cried; “I wish I had never seen you, that you should take me away. I feel that I shall hate you. You are cold, as cold as stone. You will never love me. No, not even as much as Allan and Tabby. And how can Grandpa live without me? Who is to take care of him when I am gone? Oh! Grandpa, Grandpa, don’t send me away.”

She burst into a storm of tears. Mrs. Stretfield looked at her jewelled watch. I took the hint and rose to go. Raising the trembling

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

little figure in my arms I kissed her. "Good-by, little one," I whispered. "Be brave and true, and God keep you."

I set her down and turned to Mrs. Stretfield, standing calm and tall in her sweeping draperies.

"We both know that it is for her good that she should go," I said. "But she is a child and has never known anything but love. I feel sure you will be gentle with her."

She swept me with a charming, supercilious glance. "Do not imagine she goes to a prison, and that I am the cruel jailer," she said. "I am already much attached to my little kinswoman."

With a bow over her extended hand, and a last glance at the child sobbing in Lord Carnsforth's arms, I left them. All through the gay luncheon, and later, as our merry party steamed over the lucid turquoise waters of the harbor, I was haunted by the scene of that morning. There was laughter and chatter around me, and mandolins tinkled to the sing-





GRANT TOWN



## *THE END OF AN EARLDOM*

ing of the young people. A pretty girl, who sat next to me, turned to her neighbor.

“He is so spasmodic,” I heard her say, “he either talks too much, or not at all.”

When we once more dropped anchor, I found it still lacked over an hour to dinner and I started for the island. I could bear no longer the thought of Lord Carnsforth, companionless and without sympathy.

To my surprise I found him sitting on the piazza, the hound at his feet. I softly climbed the moldy steps and approached him. He was asleep. Roses clambered over the broken balustrade, and swallows darted and twittered about him, now skimming low, then flashing above to the mossy eaves.

The air moved the thin locks above his forehead; a look as of youth had settled about the mouth. The deep lines and furrows seemed to have been smoothed away by some gentle hand, leaving an expression of perfect rest and peace.

Suddenly the hound rose and stood motionless looking into his master's face, and stoop-

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

ing, licked the hand which hung over the chair's arm. Then raising his head he broke into a long, dismal howl.

I bent forward. No breath stirred the chest. The hound's mournful cry was the dirge of an earldom.

**PRINCE CHARMING  
OF MIAMI**



# PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI

## Chapter I

If all the birds sang out of tune  
When winds their plumage tossed,  
If flowers imprisoned their perfume  
When they their sun-god lost,  
If brooks refused to dance and play  
When pools were dark with shadows gray,—  
Sad would Dame Nature be!

If all the pain on worn hearts lain  
No surface smiles concealed.  
Had all the tears in all past years  
Been from their depths revealed;  
If Love could not Grief's course restrain,  
Choke back the tears, crush down the pain,  
Fruitless would be Love's plea.

**M**IAMI seemed as dead as its patron  
saint that hot, breathless afternoon.  
The sun beat down into the narrow  
streets and on the closed blinds of the quaint,  
white-washed houses, whose overhanging bal-

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

conies made the only shade in the general glare. In the sleepy old gardens not a leaf or bird stirred. Blisters rose on the new paint of the Plaza railing, and even the negroes lying on the benches were compelled to move their sun-loving bodies into the shade. The sea wall was deserted. On the narrow strip of sand left by the receding tide, "fiddlers" sidled to and fro, and the delicate sea moss clinging to the coquina turned to brown nothingness in the intense heat. To the west, beyond the palm groves, gray shadows were gathering, which meant a storm, later on.

Old Lopo Sanchez, perched on his springless wooden cart, noticed the western shadows and urged his ambling steed to a trot, which jolted his stiff joints and caused the horse's ears to flap in unison with its rattling harness. Lopo presented a curious appearance, owing to a large piece of burlap tied to the top of his green umbrella, which, falling down and around him, looked not unlike a nun's veil. From under its ragged edge peered his elongated visage, with



## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

thin locks falling over the bent shoulders. The brown skin and browner eyes told of Spanish blood, but there was little of Spanish pride or spirit in the lined old face. Twenty years before he had fallen in love with a young Northern girl who taught the rising generation in the yellow school house. He wooed and won her in true Southern fashion, though the town wondered that the "school missus" should take good-for-nothing Lopo Sanchez for her husband. He had adored her as a weak nature will sometimes adore a stronger one. Her thrift and mental briskness he admired, though but dimly understood, and when she died after the birth of their baby daughter, he felt that something in him had snapped—the main-spring of his life was broken.

He sold out his curiosity shop and moved out of town a couple of miles to a deserted plantation on the shore. There, surrounded by relics of the home to which he had brought his girl-wife he gradually separated himself from his old interests, and was soon forgotten, or

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

only remembered as that queer old man who lived with the crabs on the edge of the sand dunes. Round his daughter he twined the broken tendrils of his lost love, and as she grew to girlhood, wreathed her with the same adoring affection he had felt for her dead mother.

But somehow he was not as happy as he told himself he should be. Was not Ria a girl to be proud of? Had she not a face like a flower, and ways the most gentle and bewitching? But he felt that she had never given him an affection as ardent and unselfish as his own. He thought he must be growing old and selfish, and when his heart felt particularly empty, would tend his potato patch with renewed vigor, or try by some little attention to make up for her lack of thoughtfulness for him.

The two led simple lives; solitary, save for the woman who helped Ria in her household matters, and their weekly visit to town to sell their oranges or flowers. For eight years Ria had studied at the convent, and read somewhat

## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

promiscuously from the public library, but she loved far better to lie for hours like a lizard in the sun, or take "headers" from the end of their dugout. Her father she loved in a gentle fashion. She would cling and purr around him in her pretty way, though much in the same way that her kitten would rub itself against a tree-trunk. It pleased her mental epidermis.

As the cart jolted on over the sandy road, Lopo thought vaguely of these things, but only vaguely, for something had occurred lately which occupied all his spare moments.

A fortnight before, on coming from the beach, he found Ria under the orange trees with her lace work, and kneeling before her, a tall young fellow, whose blue eyes were watching with interest her little brown hands, casting the shuttle to and fro.

She was smiling and dimpling, and he seemed all unconscious of the brown earth his white flannel knees were pressing. When Lopo joined them the young fellow had risen with unembarrassed grace, and explained that hav-

## AMONG THE PALMS

ing walked from the town and feeling very tired and thirsty, he had ventured to ask for some water. Lopo replied civilly, though wondering what lace work had to do with thirst, and why Ria's face should be so aglow.

To the girl the stranger was the Prince Charming, of whom she had so often dreamed. To be sure he had no flowing curls or silken doublet, but, after all, were not close-cropped hair and well-fitting flannels as comely? She looked from him to her father standing awkwardly in the sun—how rough and ugly he looked. Dick Barclay was not looking at Lopo, but at his daughter with her dusky eyes and soft, full mouth. Indeed he had continued that occupation every day ever since. Day by day the girl seemed to blossom into greater beauty—a thousand little coqueties showed themselves to Lopo's observant eyes. The young man seemed to mean well enough, and it might mean great good fortune for his little girl.

He turned "Fly Catcher" into the grove surrounding the house, and, feeling in his pocket for the ribbon he had bought her, he

## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

stroked it with his fingers. He drove around to the shed fed his horse, then went slowly up the path bordered by tall oleanders, to the house. He felt faint and tired. At the open door he paused and looked in.

Hither and thither spun a slender white figure, her skirts held in old-time fashion, while her feet kept time to the waltz she was singing. She spun round and round, here and there, like a bit of thistle-down, her head thrown back in very abandonment of joyous animation. The walls and ceiling of the room were covered with ivy, which grew on bamboo trellises, nailed to the coquina; against this dark background the airy figure of the girl stood out in spirited distinctness. Dick Barclay sat perched on the window-sill, his blue eyes following every movement with evident admiration.

“Brava! Brava!” he cried, as she passed in her whirling flight. “You are a fairy, a wind sprite.”

She laughed, and stood in pretty confusion, pulling at the roses in her belt. “You see,” she said, “father will never let me go to the

## AMONG THE PALMS

hotel hops, so sometimes I have a ball all to myself. I imagine the room," with a free sweep of her arm, "a great hall lit by hundreds of glittering lights shining down on stately men and beautiful women. There are perfumes and laughter, rustle of silks and brilliant glances, and all the bright and beautiful things I read about. Oh! I can see it quite distinctly, and can hear the music, till I have to dance, dance."

She paused, seeing Lopo in the doorway, and ran to him.

"Oh! father—your supper. I quite forgot and it must be cold. We made some cakes, Mr. Barclay and I. You should have seen him in Melvyna's old apron." She turned to her companion with a laugh. Lopo passed through to the kitchen, and cut himself some bread, after tasting the cakes now cold and heavy. He had not given Ria the ribbon. With her head full of such splendid fancies it would have seemed a poor gift. Through the closed door he could hear a murmur of words from Dick, then a



THE ROYAL PALM





## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

ripple of laughter from her. He suddenly felt old and tired. He looked at the sun, a red ball sinking behind the bank of dark shadows. He felt a strange longing to be far away, alone, where nothing could jar or hurt him any more, where the hungry feeling at his heart could be forgotten. Rising he crossed to where a bit of mirror hung on the wall. Putting his face close to it he examined it carefully. He saw a pair of dull eyes, a pained look in their depths; a thin, worn face, sensitive chin and mouth, with weak lines at the corners. He glanced down at his rough hands and coarse wrists,—then brushing his coat sleeve across his eyes, went quietly out.

## Chapter II

A WEEK of sea-breezes followed the storm of that night. Lopo spent most of the time fishing or gathering the oranges, which hung in golden plenty behind the house. Ria sang about the house or lay for hours on the sand, her head on her arms, looking up to the blue vault above, where hawks sailed lazily on motionless wings. Dick Barclay continued his daily visits, each one being a little longer than the last. Lopo noticed their talk was less unconstrained when he was near, so kept away as much as possible. The young fellow entertained her by the hour with stories of his travels, or his home in far-away New York. He explained to her the mysteries of base ball, and would send oranges whirling through the air shouting to her, "Run! run! first base!" But she liked best to hear of the Assembly balls, or coasting at Tuxedo. It seemed very wonderful and grand. One evening she nestled herself in her father's

## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

arms and told him all about it. "Oh! why can't I go where he lives?" she sighed.

One scented moonlit evening Lopo had spent making out his accounts in his slow, cramped fashion by the light of a kerosene lamp. Mosquitoes came buzzing through the window and beetles bumped about the ceiling. At last he put out the lamp and went out. Through the jasmine vines covering the piazza the moon cast flickering shadows; a mocking bird was singing in the almond tree. Lopo was conscious in his sensitive fashion of the peaceful scene. He heard the murmur of the young people and went toward them. Suddenly he paused, a dazed look growing on his face. In a shadowy corner stood Dick, his arm around the girl, her face hidden on his breast.

"Oh! Ria, little one," he was saying, "you don't know what love is. It means longing by day and dreaming by night; it means this—this." He raised her face and kissed her mouth, hair and slender throat. Lopo stirred; Dick, startled, looked up, then sprang down,

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

ran to his horse and away. Ria, with a little cry, fled past him into the house.

He stood bewildered for a moment, looking out on the sea, listening to the receding sound of the horse's hoofs. "So he loves her," he murmured, then turned and went into the house and up to his room. The moonlight showed the bare furnishings distinctly: the narrow bed, the Madonna and crucifix on the wall, a few daguerreotypes on the high bureau. The vines outside cast shadows like moving water on the painted floor and bit of rag carpet.

He sat quietly for some time, his lips moving and eyes fixed on vacancy, then rose and crossed to an old-fashioned chest of drawers with brass handles, which stood in a dim corner under the eaves. He knelt stiffly down and opened the lowest drawer. Out of this he drew a long-tailed blue coat, a snuff-colored waistcoat, and ruffled shirt, his wedding clothes. Slowly, with trembling fingers he put these on, fastened the high stock round his throat and drew on a pair of mold-spotted white gloves.

## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

Then taking from the drawer a beaver hat, he went down, and out of the house.

It was midnight. He left the gate open behind him, and followed the road through the woods to the shore. The tide was at its ebb. His heavy boots crushed with a faint sound the bits of shell on the sand. No living thing seemed alive but himself and a crane, disturbed from its sleep among the reeds. Tiny waves ran up to the shore and back again, and some crabs scuttled swiftly to their holes as though frightened by the strange, lonely figure. Lopo plodded on with bent head for a mile, then turned into a lane which led to the grave-yard. No tree or shrub grew there, only the brown moss, dotted with graves, stretched down to the shore. The ruins of a chapel stood bare and gaunt in the pale light, with vines growing over its shattered altar.

Lopo looked neither to the right nor left but passed on to a low mound near the water's edge. On a wooden cross at its head, painted in black letters were the words:—

# AMONG THE PALMS

RACHAEL,

BELOVED WIFE OF LOPO SANCHEZ,

BORN 1847, DIED 1866.

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*At the foot of the cross I lived, and now repose.*

He laid down his hat, and lovingly stroked the brown turf. The shadow of the cross fell on his bent head. He felt he was near one who had loved him and who would understand. Was not the only living thing he cared for about to leave him, and give her wealth of love, which never had been his, to a stranger? That she loved, he was convinced; for the instant her face had been lifted to Dick's rain of kisses—there was a look there he had never seen before in all the years of her love-tended life. She had always shrunk from his caresses—perhaps he had loved her too well—he had heard women were sometimes so. Dick would come on the morrow and ask him for his all, his little girl, and carry her North, many weary miles away. How he would miss the click of

## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

her little feet about the house; the warmth of her young arms about his neck. His heart shrank before the vista of loneliness. She should not go poorly to her husband; he would give her the two thousand dollars he had saved. She had always liked things fine and gay; well, she should have them. Perhaps she might miss the old peaceful life now and then, and come back to him for a while, but he thought not. Her little brown hands would grow soft and white, there would be no more cakes to make or chickens to feed. She would have many fine horses instead of old Fly Catcher, and ride in a splendid carriage instead of the wooden cart. Yes, he would tell this fine lover on the morrow to take her, and no sign should escape him of any selfish pain.

The shadow of the cross had passed from him and the moon bathed the old blue coat with kindly light. He was still sitting there when the stars paled before the gold and rose of the coming day.

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

It was nearly ten o'clock. Lopo put the house in order and ate his breakfast alone. He had stolen several times to Ria's door on tiptoe, but no sound reached him. He supposed she had slept but little during the night and felt tired. Had he not wandered about the pine barrens all night in sleepless ecstasy when Rachael first said she loved him? At last he went down to the beach, pushed off the skiff, and, rod in hand, waited for her to appear. He would notice nothing; lovers were always strange and shy at first.

At last she appeared in the doorway. He saw she had on her white Sunday gown. She did not see him, but stood motionless, looking up, then throwing out both arms with a glad little movement ran down and out to the garden. An hour later, when Lopo entered the house, she was arranging great masses of palm branches about the house. Every available cup and vase were filled with roses. Her cheeks glowed like pomegranate blossoms, her whole being radiated youth and hope. During the



## *PRINCE CHARMING OF MIAMI*

day nothing was said on either side of what both were feeling so intensely. After their noon dinner, which was the time Mr. Barclay usually came, Lopo put on a stiff white collar and his polished boots, and settled himself in elegant leisure. He had aged during the night, but Ria did not observe it. A rose blossomed in the girl's hair and she had carelessly pinned another in his black coat. She wandered restlessly about the house, starting at every little sound. Tea-time arrived. The girl had spread the table herself, studying the placing of each old silver spoon and flower. The sun slowly sank in the glowing west and twilight crept up from the sea, but Dick had not come. They finally sat down to the gay little table. Both made feeble efforts at conversation, and once at a sudden noise outside, the girl half rose from the table flushing, then paling.

"The Fly Catcher seems uneasy to-night," the old man carelessly remarked, a dull pain at his heart as he saw the strained, gray look settle on the girl's face.

## AMONG THE PALMS

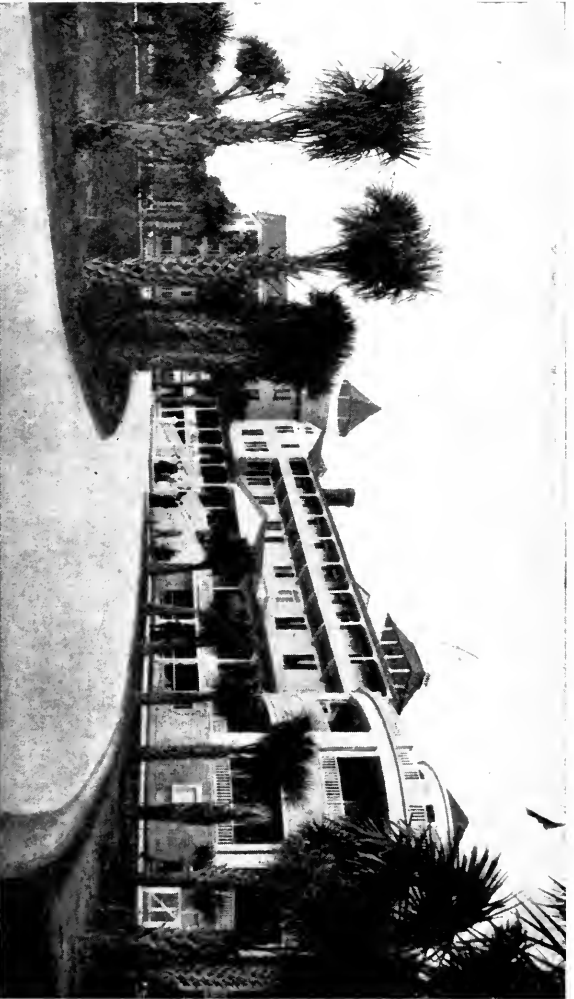
The stars came out one by one in the deep vault above—the beauty and peace of the evening before were again there, but neither knew it. Both were listening for the sound of a horse which did not come. Ria had grown strangely quiet. Lopo could see her white face through the dusk as she sat on the topmost step of the piazza, looking intently into the dark shadows of the trees. Ten, eleven o'clock. Ria had crept into her father's arms, her face hidden in his neck. The little rose was quite faded, and the muslin gown was starchless and rumpled. They sat quietly, saying nothing, his hand stroking the tossed curls on his shoulder. It was difficult to tell which suffered more. Slow tears rose to Lopo's old eyes and ran down the natural gullies of his furrowed cheeks, to the slim arm which wound itself about his throat. They gradually made a little damp spot on the thin sleeve. She stirred and passed her hand over his face.

"Will he never come?" she sobbed at last.

"I'm afraid he never will, daughter," was the answer. And he never did.

**THE ADVENTURE OF A  
PAIR OF SHOES  
OF ORMOND**





ORMOND HOTEL



# THE ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES AT ORMOND

## Chapter I

**M**Y troubles and my happiness began in Ormond, March 17, at precisely half after three in the afternoon.

The day had been fearfully warm, and tired of the chatter and buzz of the hotel piazzas, I tucked a volume of Emerson in my pocket and fled down to the water for a quiet pipe. Taking a row boat I paddled out, but the sun proved too ardent even there. I was about to give it up, when I spied the long pier which juts out over the water two or three hundred feet. It would certainly be cool under there I thought; and was soon in its shadow. I tied the boat to the barnacled posts, shipped oars, and stretched myself full length in the bottom of the boat. The light filtered dimly through

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

the cracks of the boards above, and the tide gently swayed the boat as it gurgled and swirled round the great palmettos which formed the piles.

Emerson held my interest for awhile, but the green, wavering light blurred the page. Gradually my eyes closed, and I was fast asleep. In the midst of a most interesting dream, where I was reciting poems to a row of crabs perched on their hind legs on the edge of the boat, I was awakened by the sound of voices. The faint tones surged around me; but whether they came from the mermaids below, or the above mentioned crabs, I could not for a moment tell.

Suddenly I discovered, dangling almost over my head, a small pair of feet. They were encased in a remarkably well made pair of patent leather shoes, evidently new, as the number, "2 a" was distinctly marked in the curve of the heel. The little toes were pointed, and from them rose a beautifully curved instep, clad in dark blue stockings, embroidered with



## *ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES*

tiny white polka dots, though these were almost lost in a foamy mass of lace-edged draperies.

This bewitching pair of feet dangled not three yards from my astonished visage, but in vain I stretched and twisted for a glimpse of their owner. She was sitting on the edge of the pier and with her a man, whose voice only betrayed his presence.

The gurgling of the water dulled their conversation, but words floated down to me. Suddenly my now thoroughly awakened ears heard the deeper voice say :

“ But you must have known I loved you all this time, dear? ” And the girl’s voice in ardent protest ;—

“ Why of course I knew you loved me, as I did you, Jack ; but after all these years of boy and girl affection, I never dreamed of this. I thought men never fell in love with their sisters.”

Great heavens, here was a state of things ! What should I do ? If I moved they would know it—if I stayed, to what depths of perfidy

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

might I not be the innocent victim? Impulse prompted me to row out from under them at once, but I hated to cause the owner of those pretty patent leathers such embarrassment. Besides I didn't know them, and probably never would: so in a whirl of mortification I lay down in the bottom of the boat again, with my fingers in my ears.

The words became inaudible, but those little dangling feet seemed to have a language all their own. They twitched and beat the air in paroxysms of either grief or wrath as "Jack's" tones grew louder, and hung limply down, as his pleadings waxed pathetic. I felt sure she was pretty as well as clever.

For quite half an hour I laid there scarcely daring to breathe, and studied every line of the arched instep, slender heel, and even counted the polka dots. It was with difficulty that I refrained from tying the strings which her nervousness had undone. I found myself growing anxious. Was she going to accept him? I

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began to hate "Jack." Bother the fellow—why couldn't he take "no" and quit?

Who could she be? I searched my memory for all the shoes of the women I had met, but no such patent leathers crossed my mental vision. The voice only seemed a bit familiar, but the splash of the water made that too indistinct to place. And "Jack," who was he?

Gradually my curiosity and interest grew to a resolve to know the owner of those feet. Ormond was comparatively a small place. Surely I could trace her by those very shoes and polka dots; or else listen for the name of "Jack" on piazzas, and haunt hotel registers till I found him, and then her.

As this resolved itself in my cerebrum, the feet suddenly disappeared, first one, then the other, leaving empty air and a lonely feeling somewhere within me. A rustle of readjusted skirts and the tramp of heavy feet on the boards above me. I grasped the oars and flew out from underneath, to see this so far bodiless

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girl. But alas! they had vanished. A pile of lumber obstructed all view, and they quickly reached, and were lost in the crowd.

It was nearly twilight when I reached my hotel. The tiny, colored lights which served as illumination for the loggias of the *Hotel Ormond*, gleamed faintly among the palms and creepers. The moon above gleamed adown one side of the building, leaving the depths of the loggias in profound shadow.

Entering the deserted hall I instinctively looked about for any feminine figures, but only one was visible—she of mammoth proportions, and evidently not a wearer of “number 2’s.” While dressing, and all through dinner, I was haunted by those polka dots, and that half heard caressing voice.

My seat for several weeks had been at Mrs. Cabot’s table. She was from Boston, and was acting as chaperone to her niece, Miss Randolph, a charming New York girl. Mrs. Cabot was as true a type of the former place as her niece was of her native city. She was thin,

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pale and highly finished. Her native east wind seemed to blow all frivolity from her proximity, leaving an atmosphere of rather depressed refinement. One felt it always vulgar to be anything but resigned to the incongruities of life in her presence.

Not so her niece however. She had the half flirtatious, but wholly fetching air of the average New York girl. Her tall and slender figure was always draped and tailored artistically. She affected large hats, which admirably set off her golden-brown hair, and rose-leaf complexion. Her open and childlike glance was a constant foil for her fashionable tricks of speech and gesture. She was both worldly and innocent, but with a fund of common sense which prevented an exaggeration of either.

They left the table before me, and while cooling my coffee, I considered the advisability of calling her womanly shrewdness to my aid. But on the other hand, I dreaded that direct gaze of astonishment when she should learn of my idiocy. That I should find the owner of

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

those patent leathers I was determined, but how to do it? Suddenly a brilliant idea struck me.

Shoes were always blackened, varnished or oiled, and for that purpose were placed outside the doors at night. Eureka! I would search the midnight corridors above till I found them; get number of room, inquire at office—nothing easier. “All is fair in love and war.” And then “Jack”! with skill I could learn the names of the numberless young men one constantly met in this informal life. If, however, all my plans should fail, I would take Miss Randolph into my confidence. There would be no risk in this, as I had been with her constantly, and had never seen her pretty feet in any thing but tennis shoes or button boots.

My coffee and cogitations finished, I sauntered out from the brilliant dining-room to the rotunda. Men and women in evening dress sat or strolled about. Little groups were constantly forming and breaking, like bits of color in a kaleidoscope. Here and there among the

## *ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES*

columns, pretty women sat, around whom clustered an ever changing number of black coats.

In one of these groups was Miss Randolph, her delicate face slightly flushed by the heat, and the effort of being heard in the noise and confusion. I instinctively went toward her, but thought "business before pleasure." So I sauntered here and there, my eyes glued to the floor, snatching side-long glances at the slippers, shoes and boots peeping from under draperies. But to no purpose.

Then I went to the hotel register. With outward calm but inward trepidation, I turned the pages and eagerly searched for anything beginning with J. Several Jacobs, Johnstons and Jones were there, but no "Jacks."

"Of course," I concluded, "he wouldn't register himself so—how stupid of me!" I decided to give up my quest for the present, and wait till the feminine portion of the guests had retired. Then would I carry out my clever scheme in the silent halls above. I decided to wait till midnight. Everyone would surely

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

be abed by that time, and, besides, I might be mistaken for a midnight marauder if seen prowling far from my own quarters. So I smoked and dreamed of those polka-dots till everyone had retired, save some sleepy hall-boys, and a sleepier clerk at the desk.

I got off the lift at my own floor to avoid suspicion. The electric lights were mostly out. In the dimness a vista of door-mats and occasional boots and shoes stretched away on either hand. The big affairs I steered clear of, but darted hither and thither among smaller shoes. Such shapes and sizes of leather foot gear may I never meet again! Surely the average American foot is not the fairy-like thing we so fondly imagine. Up and down the halls I wandered, getting more and more nervous, but to no purpose. Once, as I stooped to examine a possible pair, the door suddenly opened and a curl-papered face glared at me and then vanished with a slam of the door. She evidently thought me a lunatic or a thief. Then again I darted across the hall and dropped to



## *ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES*

my knees on a door-mat, as a bell-boy flew round the corner, a pitcher of icewater borne on high.

"Is enything happened to yo' sah?" he asked, with an evident suspicion of intoxication.

"No," I exclaimed, energetically, "only stumbled a little." But I know the little darkie thought he knew better.

Having explored every door to the very attic, I concluded I had been a fool long enough for that night, and would wait till morning for a continuation of that character.

## Chapter II

THE next morning found me still on patent leathers intent, though while dressing I could not help laughing at the spectacle I must have presented the night before. However, I was still resolved to do the same thing at every respectable hotel in the place till I had exhausted the supply.

All that day my gaze refused to wander heavenward. Out sailing that morning and at tennis that afternoon, I searched the "little mice peeping in and out" of my feminine companions in vain. My subtle scheme to learn the masculine Christian names did me credit.

That night I circumnavigated the halls of two hotels in vain, and so it went on for several days. At last one day while watching the bathers, I heard a girl's voice say (not *the* voice) behind me:

"I wish Jack Townsend would go in; he is a famous swimmer." I started. I gasped for breath! Turning round, I eyed the girl in such

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a way that she looked frightened. But I did not know her, and felt certain I had never seen her with any one I did know. "Jack—Jack Townsend," he was the man. I felt it; I knew it. Yet how to find him. He might be one of the group then entering; but still he was as far from me as the North Pole.

All that day I asked every one I met if they knew Jack Townsend, but always to be disappointed. I again searched hotel registers, and at last found his autograph in a firm finished hand, and "New York" after the name. I gave the clerk my most effective smile.

"Can you tell me what Mr. Townsend is like?" I asked. "I am anxious to know if he is the same person I met some time since."

"No," he replied, with lofty indifference, and a supercilious stare at my disappointed countenance: "I can't remember all the transient guests of this house."

With a sigh I turned away. Almost had I reached him, but a miss was as bad as a mile.

That afternoon, while riding along the won-

## AMONG THE PALMS

derful road bordered by giant palmettos which skirts the Halifax river, I passed a merry party also *à cheval*. As they cantered by me, a girl's voice cried: "This way, Mr. Morris, you know we agreed to meet Jack Townsend out here."

My heart gave a bound; and whipping up my horse, I trotted after to join the party, several of whom I knew. "At last," I murmured, "the enemy is mine!"

Half a mile on I joined them, just as a tall, thin man on a short, fat horse met them. Could this gray-haired, solemn visaged person be the "Jack" whose manly young voice had said "I love you" with such feeling? They were all chattering around me, and I roused myself when one of the women introduced him to me as "Mr. Townsend." "He is my Uncle Jack," she added.

"It is warm riding, eh?" he asked, in a voice which made me think of "Hark from the tombs a doleful sound." I turned away in dis-





## *ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES*

gusted despair, and excusing myself, rode homeward. I was as far as ever from those adorable patent leathers.

A few days after, Miss Randolph, having gone off with another man for the morning, had left me in a decidedly sulky frame of mind. There was no use in my devoting myself to another girl, as she was not there to see; so I started off for a solitary stroll. Having often heard of the picturesque quaintness of "Africa," the so-called negro quarter, I turned my steps toward that dark portion of the globe.

I passed the hotel gardens with their stretches of lawn and shrubbery, on through a narrow street, to find myself indeed in a strange land. Everything was black which should have been white, from the faces around me to the pickaninnies' pinafores, which were the blackest of all. Tiny cabins edged the road, their holes and gaps smothered in jasmine vines and creepers. Shiny black children rolled in the dirt about the steps, while their elders lolled over

## AMONG THE PALMS

the broken-down fences smoking their pipes, and as free from all signs of care as any of our "coupon-cutters" of Wall Street.

My esthetic enjoyment was brought to a sudden end by a sight which filled my very soul with rapture. My long-sought polka-dots were fluttering gaily in the breeze not ten feet away! There on a line they dangled, attenuated and damp, but still my polka-dots. In a trice I was knocking on the mossy lintel of the door. The fattest human creature mine eyes had beheld since my boyhood day at Barnum's rolled toward me, shaking the unsubstantial building to its foundations. Her round, good-natured face beamed a shrewd kindliness on me as I said:

"Aunty, I notice a pair of stockings—er, the blue ones. They are just like those belonging to—er—my—er"—

"Yo' lady, sah?" she benevolently interrupted. "Why bress yo' soul, de Lawd hab sent yo' sho' 'nuff. Dem stockings hab gib me mo' trouble sah! Dey done come here in de



## *ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES*

wash, and when I sent 'em back, they don't b'long to nobody. I done gone most clean crazy wid 'em, fur I nebber gits my close mixed, like dem washer-ladies in de town, no-how. Yo' kin ask if Aunt Hetty is sich a po' chile es dat."

"Well, Aunt Hetty," I replied, with some embarrassment, "I can't be quite sure that they do belong to my—er—lady, though she has some like them which I should like to find."

Meanwhile a hundred thoughts whirled through my brain. I could not take them, surely not. But why not take one of these missing links? Aunt Hetty stood there stroking them with her parboiled fingers, and I took one reverently in my hand.

"After all," I said to her, "I don't believe they are quite like my lady's. I tell you what we'll do. I'll take one and inquire, and you keep the other in case the owner turns up. If she should, mind now, here is my address. Send me her name and address, and she shall receive it at once,—see?"

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

“Bress yo’ soul, honey, dat’ll be all right,” was her comforting reply. “My ole man is a great han’ fur writen, an’ I’ll hab him do it. I’s powerful weak when it comes to plannin’ but yo’ am a sho’ ’nuff manager, he-he-he!”

So I left the smiling vision in the frame of the doorway and turned homeward. I was in a mingled state of triumph and dismay. One of the polka-dots was in my breast pocket, but I refrained from looking at or touching it. But it was there, its silken texture heaving with my every breath. Surely Stanley had made no happier discoveries in darkest Africa than had I.

## Chapter III

**T**HAT evening the annual yachting festivities were given, comprising fireworks, an illuminated yacht race, and ball in the hotel. Miss Randolph was to leave the following day for Atlanta, her aunt joining her later in Washington. We had been asked with several others on the yacht which was to lead the procession. Every vessel large and small was illuminated from bow to stern. Japanese lanterns outlined each mast and sail, and the Club house was also a mass of twinkling brightness. As the first flight of rockets burst against the sky, the yachts formed in procession and moved up the river, a fleet of starry splendor.

Miss Randolph and I had strolled to the stern of our yacht, and stood listening to the music—admiring the novel sight. She was in her ball-gown, and looked a fitting part of the dreamy beauty. Suddenly she remembered her evening's mail which I had kept in my pocket

## *AMONG THE PALMS*

for her. As she read her letters, I thought of my resolve to tell her the history of those fateful shoes if my own efforts failed. I felt that her woman's wit might solve the problem.

She looked up from the last sheet with a serious and preoccupied face. If she had been a man I should have thought "bills"; but being an attractive girl I decided,—a man. But her face looking pale under the moon's rays, gradually regained its old archness, and I felt my way to the matter in hand.

"Miss Randolph," I said, "does a woman feel flattered at a man's confidence?"

"In herself?" she asked.

"No, a confidence given her."

"Well," she said, "that depends on the nature of the confidence. If about himself, yes."

This was encouraging, but I thought she eyed me somewhat mockingly.

"But I want to tell you something very much," I said. "It is about myself in a way. I am in a dilemma, and feel sure you can help me."

## *ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES*

She looked politely interested, and I plunged into my story. At the commencement she expressed no opinion of my eavesdropping; but as I described the tender avowal I had so unwittingly heard, and the two little feet dangling so near me, she said:

“Poor girl, I hope she’ll never know. But he must have been a stupid ‘Jack’ to propose in broad daylight, right after lunch. He might have known he would get ‘no.’”

I dwelt lightly on my search for the shoes, trying to place my midnight prowls in as dignified a light as possible. But at this part of the story she laughed immoderately.

“If you ever do meet her,” she said, “don’t tell her that; it robs the situation of all its romance.” Then she sobered. “Poor Jack; he is probably suffering now for love of his unloving sweetheart.” Her hand smoothed the letter she held: she was probably pitying the writer as another “Jack.”

The polka-dots I had kept in the background. I instinctively felt she would not approve the

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presence of that stolen property at that moment reposing in my pocket. She listened to all I had to say with interest, but not with the degree of sympathy I had hoped for. When I finished she suddenly rose. All laughter left her face.

"Well," she said, "it was kind of you to tell me this. I fear I can do nothing to help you, as I leave to-morrow. I hope you may find the girl after I am gone, and that she will prove worthy of your labor. She is certainly fortunate to have you so literally at her feet."

She gathered up her shawl and moved toward another group. I somehow felt dismissed, disapproved of, and, yes, a little snubbed. I bowed and left her, and strolled away alone. And to-morrow she was to leave! How I wished I had not told her, for she evidently thought me idiotic. The rest of the evening I cursed those patent leathers.

At breakfast the next morning, Miss Randolph chattered gaily, and treated me with the same friendliness as of yore. But there was,

## *ADVENTURE OF A PAIR OF SHOES*

after all, a difference. I felt it in her cordial "good-by" and the enigmatical glance she threw me from the car window as the train moved away. At all events she was not offended.

The hotel seemed strangely silent on my return. I knocked at Mrs. Cabot's door, hoping for a little pity or petting.

"Come in," she said; and I entered. She was sitting by the window, a volume of Ibsen on her knee, and I drew my chair near hers.

"Well, Mrs. Cabot, you miss Miss Randolph as we all do," I began.

"More," she answered. "My niece is charming company for me, as I do not enjoy hotel life. One cannot get into sympathy with so many people."

While she was speaking her gaze wandered at intervals beyond me in a conscious way, and she spoke absently. I turned, my eyes following her line of vision. Suppressing an exclamation of surprise, I leaped from my chair at the extraordinary sight which met my eyes.

## AMONG THE PALMS

There in the centre of a huge sheet of paper nailed to the wall, and bordered two inches deep with black, hung those fateful patent leathers! I recognized them at a glance as they hung from the nail, bunches of immortelles falling out of them. Underneath, in big, black letters, I read the legend,—

“To the memory of the dear departed.”

I turned to Mrs. Cabot with some inarticulate words.

“Yes, they are my niece’s shoes,” she drawled, in her cool, even voice. “I can’t imagine why she left them there, but she begged me to leave them for a day or two. Yesterday afternoon her old Aunt Hetty, as she calls her, was here, and they apparently had some joke together. It is a little strange, but New York girls are always somewhat inexplicable to me.”

The situation was now clearly before me in all its awfulness. Alas! she knew everything, even the polka-dots. Suffice to say I too left the next day for Atlanta, and—well, I can now afford to patronize the memory of “Jack.”



**PRISCILLA ALDEN**



# PRISCILLA ALDEN

## *An Episode of Tampa*

### Chapter I

**I**T was a long perspective on which her faded eyes looked down. To her it seemed as though her real self had died a long time ago, in the past which ended when she said "good-by" to her brief girlhood and to her well-ordered, thrifty life in the New England town where she was born.

She remembered the neat, white house with its wide piazzas and white, fluted columns, on which the elms threw flickering shadows in Summer, and whose eaves were shrouded with snow in Winter; the quiet of the wide, grass-grown streets: the green-shuttered Meeting-house opposite, flanked by the post-office, and the familiar farmers grouped upon the well-worn granite steps.

The simple life had filled every nook in her nature: of the outside world she knew noth-

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ing, and cared nothing for. Those sheltering New England hills had for twenty-five years shut out all care and anxiety. Her mother, a neutral tinted woman, had always been an invalid, whose bodily infirmities exacted only knitted shawls and inactivity of mind and body.

As Priscilla grew into girlhood, the administration of the household fell naturally on her young shoulders. It was to her that her father looked for advice as to the management of the farm, and she was the umpire to whom he appealed, when old Henny, their maid-of-all-work, would give him what she called a "root-in'," for meddling with things which she considered none of his business.

Priscilla had been well educated, first at the village school, and finished off by her father, who had graduated from Harvard as his grandfathers had done before him. It was he who kept before her child-eyes the past glories of the house of Alden,—their important function in the first establishment of civilization in this country; and it was his ambition to live up

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to the standard of his ancestry, as far as his limited field of action allowed.

Gideon Alden had been born with the inef-faceable impression that he was not as other men are. He felt that he was a genius, though in what direction his gifts tended, neither he nor his friends had been able to decide. He had married at twenty, and was still a comparatively young and prepossessing man. His tall, slender figure was always fastidiously dressed; he wore his hair rather long, and affected loose, flying cravats. Among his towns-people he was regarded as very decorative and accomplished, though not of much practical benefit. They looked upon him much as they did on the ornamental cornice of the town-hall; as a "trimmin'," but of no real use to the community. At the public meetings he was always a conspicuous figure, and his resonant voice and rounded periods always commanded attention as an exponent of Harvard eloquence.

At intervals he would appear in his most be-ruffled shirt and highest stock, which were the

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visible signs of a commercial mood; and on these occasions he would go to Boston for days at a time, to return with an elated bearing, sanguine and happy over some wonderful scheme, by which his family would again take the position to which he considered them entitled. Fortune was, to him, always hovering benignly in the near future, and this assurance gave him a gentle acquiescence to his rather cramped financial status.

As a child, Priscilla had regarded her father as the acme of all that was great and noble. When in the long winter evenings they sat around the wood-fire, she would listen with wide admiring eyes, as he described the mysterious world beyond the hills, and their future career there when the money should begin to come in. With graphic emphasis he would expatiate on the wealth his shrewd investments were sure to bring.

The child, in her dim, fire-lit corner, would watch the shadows flicker on the portraits of her Puritan ancestors upon the wall, until they

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seemed to wink and nod an assurance of the bright life which awaited her. What a beautiful world it would be; what untold happiness would she find in this golden future which the genii were preparing for her, beyond those snow-clad hills.

Time passed on, and the child became a woman with reasoning powers, which gradually awakened her from fantastic dreams. From regarding her father as an oracle of delightful truths, she began to realize his shallowness and visionary proclivities. The gradual realization of his vanity and selfishness at first hurt her keenly, and it was a slow and painful task to reconstruct her impression of his character,—to exchange her confiding faith in him for a sort of protecting pity for the smallness of his nature. Her newly awakened perception quickly gauged the value of that fairyland which his sanguine hopes had depicted, and by degrees her doubts resolved into conviction, that he was deceiving himself as well as them. But at last he grew querulous when

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Henny reminded him of unpaid bills, and had unusual moods of silence.

One day he returned from Boston and, running through the house and up to his wife's room, fell on his knees beside her. "It is lost—all lost," he cried, burying his white face in her lap.

Not long after, the house was sold. Her mother's health gave way under the shock, and this, with the necessity of an economy which they did not care to exhibit before their neighbors, made it easy for them to accept the doctor's advice to seek a Southern climate. The letting down seemed more easy in exchanging the bleak farm for Florida, and the early November snows found them journeying Southward. To Priscilla the journey was crowded with anxious thought, for every turn of the iron wheels carried her on to a wide sea of new experiences.

In those days the locomotive did not deign to visit so obscure and remote a place as Tampa. The only approach to it was by a rude



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stage-coach, which three times a week dragged its slow length for fifteen or twenty miles, bringing the mail and an occasional stranger. The girl from New England gazed about her with intelligent curiosity, as they drove into the old town, beneath the row of water-oaks, which were then young like herself, but have now grown into veritable gray-beards, whispering sadly among themselves of the changes which have sprung up about them.

In the starlight, strange, white-walled houses rose on every side, their over-hanging balconies seeming almost to meet. The tinkle of a guitar from a shadowy door-way, the quaint Plaza with its moss-draped trees and ancient Cathedral, all seemed to the girl like a bit of Spain, which had floated across the Atlantic to be lodged among the palmettos.

The next day found Priscilla, with the buoyancy of youth, beginning to construct a new world for themselves. Her father seemed to think he had done his share of unappreciated toil and left everything in her hands. They

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secured a modest house, vine-clad and roomy, and here Priscilla arranged the household gods which they had brought with them, as much like the old home as possible. The Puritan forefathers looked down on them in bewigged wonder from the coquina walls, and the tall clock ticked from the corner as of yore. In the corner of the parlor were the collection of daguerreotypes; the silver candle sticks on the mantel were flanked by a print of George Washington and a sampler depicting a weeping willow and a family of thirteen children kneeling round a tomb. But in spite of Priscilla's efforts, it all seemed sadly strange. Her mother seemed to feel it most keenly. At first, as she lay on the rose-scented balcony, inhaling the soft air, a little color crept into her cheeks, but, as the months went by, Priscilla knew she was fading.

Her father adopted the new order of things more easily. He evolved schemes for regenerating the South, and arranged his neckties as artistically as of yore. His days were spent



PRISCILLA'S GARDEN



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chiefly sitting in the sun on the Plaza, or talking to the natives, who were only too glad to find a new idler to amuse them.

Priscilla felt that she was a square peg in a round hole. Her thrift and mental briskness were not understood by her neighbors, and they resented these as a reproach to themselves. The odd ways of "dem Northerners" were reported by the astonished Chloe, whom Priscilla stood over until every nook and cranny was made to yield up its stores of hoarded spiders and dust. Every piece of furniture was put through a course of scrubbing and polishing, at which Chloe would continually mutter to herself, "Well, I nebber."

Then the weed-choked garden was marked off in irreproachable paths and beds, and seeds of hollyhocks, ragged-robins and pansies from the old home were planted. The broken-down fence had new life and new pickets put into it and was painted a vivid white.

When order reigned everywhere within the pale of home, Priscilla turned her cool, gray

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eyes upon her moral and social surroundings. Her father's acquaintances of the Plaza had become interested and sent their wives to call. Mr. and Mrs. Vinci Lopez, her next door neighbors, declaimed their descent from a Spanish grandee, during the first half hour of acquaintance, and proved their cordiality by sending every day one of their seven dark-eyed children to borrow a little tea or sugar and other household commodities,—all, however, in quantities too small to be worth returning. They were all kind and anxious to make the new-comers as much at their ease as they were themselves.

Priscilla soon found that there was to be no outlet for her New England proclivities. There were no husking-bees, no warm stockings or mittens to knit for the farm-hands; and as to the poor, they seemed to be the most happy and contented of them all. She looked up the Protestant church of the place, which she found to be Episcopal; a newly organized and struggling congregation, under the rectorship of Doctor Rankin, a refined, well-educated, but

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dreamy old man, hardly equal to the exigencies of his position. Priscilla could not feel at home there. The form and ritualism seemed strange to her orthodox mind and smacked of "popery." She got quite flustered Sunday mornings, hunting for the places in her new prayer-book, and the new-fangled hymns she found it difficult to follow. She then interested herself in the seven uncared-for children next door; at first winning their confidence by cookies, then trying to instil under their tangled curls some rudiments of learning and personal neatness, but in vain. As long as cookies held out they were docile enough, but with their disappearance they returned to the sun outside and laughed and rolled in the sand, regardless of all laws save those of sleep and hunger.

The very poor also did not seem to need her. Some oysters from the harbor to eat, the sun to warm them and a calico gown made their sum of happiness, and any overtures from the "Yankee woman" were resented as interference. Occasionally a party of Northerners

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would linger in the quaint, old city for a while, but with the first hot days of early Spring they would disappear. These people she rarely met, so her life narrowed down to but little beyond her own garden.

Much of her time was given to her mother, who soon found it impossible to make her daily journey to the jasmine-covered balcony. A year, two years passed, in which Priscilla knew little beyond the needs of the mother who had been her dearest treasure. At last one day she fell asleep. They buried her in the little graveyard, in the melancholy shadow of the Florida moss which swathed the towering palms, and in her grave were left Priscilla's last hopes. Her youth was over. She grew silent and was much alone. Threads of gray were seen among the brown hair, which she wore plainly off her forehead. Lines appeared in her cheeks, from which the roses of youth had fled. She knew it, and would smile grimly to herself in her little mirror under the eaves. Who was to care? Her father seemed to have the facility



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of throwing unpleasant truth away, as a boy would toss away a pebble. He slept, ate and smiled as of yore. One of his Spanish friends had taught him the guitar, and he would sit in the twilight singing their weird love-songs, his fine profile turned to Priscilla's tired eyes. He had acquired the habit of sitting by the hour on the end of the wharf, watching the sail-boats and gulls floating about the harbor. Priscilla of late had seen but little of him. He sometimes stayed away all day, to return at night gay and debonaire and chide her for her quiet life.

"Why don't you stir up a bit?" he would ask, "and make friends as I do? There are a number of people quite worth talking to."

Time glided monotonously by. She only marked the seasons by the falling of the oak leaves from the great trees on the Plaza and the increased stagnation of the town in the Summer months.

## Chapter II

ONE soft evening in March, Priscilla was sitting in the shadows of the vine on the lower piazza. From across the way the tinkle of a guitar and occasional laughter floated to her inattentive ears. She was wondering if her life was always to follow its present monotonous channel. The past few years had been very desolate. She longed for the scents and sounds of her old home. In a few weeks the apple-boughs would be laden with their pink blossoms;—how sweet were those Northern Springs! But those apple-blossoms were a thousand miles away and there was no money to carry her back to them. She saw her life as it might have been.

“Perhaps,” she thought, “I might have had a lover like other women. Some one to love and care for me; a home of my own, and children. I wonder whether it is myself or circumstances which is at fault? All women, I thought, had some one whose whole affections

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were theirs. But I have never had any one."

She was luxuriating in a vague pity for herself, when she brought herself up with a turn.

"Priscilla Alden," she said half audibly, "are you losing your head? Haven't you more sense than to sit here mooning, and wondering what the use of living is, when you know you've a father who doesn't know enough to come in when it rains? How would he get along without you, I wonder; who is there to care for him?" The thought comforted her.

As the words died on her lips, she heard a sound at the gate and, looking up, saw two persons coming up the path. One she recognized as her father, and by his side was a girlish figure apparently hanging back as though loth to follow. She heard her father's voice in gentle protest, as he urged her forward. They reached the steps. Priscilla, with a cold thrill of premonition, stepped out of the shadow and stood, a tall, severe figure, in the full light of the moon.

"Who is this, father?" she asked.

## AMONG THE PALMS

“ Now don’t excite yourself, Priscilla,—you will welcome my wife cordially.” Then, turning to the girl,—“ This is my daughter, and I feel sure you will soon be good friends.”

For a moment all was blurred to Priscilla’s vision. The mockingbird’s roulades from a neighboring tree seemed faint and far away. Then she took a deep breath and looked at the girl. A face was upturned to hers in which beauty and bloom were combined with the weakness of a child. A pair of dark eyes searching hers with some timidity. Priscilla held out her hand. “ This is of course a surprise to me.” With rather an ironic smile she turned to her father. “ I will try to be a good mother to your wife,”—then turned and fled up the creaking stairs to her room.

For several days they all three were self-conscious, but they soon, at least outwardly, adapted themselves to circumstances. Carmona soon forgot any awkwardness of her position and flitted about the once quiet house like a bird of brilliant plumage. She was the

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daughter of the light-house keeper and had a little patrimony of her own. A piano was bought, and soon waltzes and negro melodies echoed through the rooms, which before had only resounded to the stately tunes of "China,"

These two women could not understand each other. One grave, methodical, with a conscience keenly alive to all deviations from the strictest propriety: the other gay, inconsequent, oblivious of everything save the amusing side of life. But Priscilla came gradually to like the girl, from the very necessity of caring for her. The gay little gowns were to be mended and the rooms tidied up after her twenty times a day. Carmona would lie about like a kitten, watching Priscilla, and asking curious questions. Of course she was a Romanist, but hardly an orthodox one. She had somewhat audacious ideas of her own in regard to right and wrong, and an accommodating conscience, which was apt to stretch to suit the exigencies of the hour. Priscilla's unswerving code of religion and life she felt to be unrea-

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sonable, and did not hesitate to say so. Priscilla felt in a way responsible for these heresies, but when she endeavored to enlighten her young step-mother, she was met by a light rail-lery which baffled her.

One night Priscilla had knelt down in her room for her nightly prayer. She heard the door open and Carmona's soft steps enter and pause in the center of the room. She kept on to the audible "amen," and rose. The girl was standing in the center of the room, with disheveled curls, and with a sharp, bird-like expression on her face.

"Aunt," she said, as she always called her, "if God thinks a thing good for you, He will give it won't He?"

"Certainly Carmona," Priscilla answered.

"And if He thinks a thing bad for you, He won't give it, will He?"

"Certainly not."

"Then what is the use of asking Him at all, if He always does as He likes? Isn't it rather interfering with His business?"

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The curious eyes searched hers with innocent inquiry, but, as often before, Priscilla could not know how much was jest or how much was earnestness. She endeavored to inculcate some idea of the reality and importance of life into the girl's empty mind, but in vain. She preferred chattering to her girl friends, who now habitually loitered away their days in Priscilla's well-ordered premises.

A year passed, and a son was born; named by Priscilla, Benjamin Alden. She dreaded the child having a foreign name and was rejoiced that his mother made no objection. Carmona regarded the child as a new plaything, and as he grew older they would roll and tumble about together in the sun like two kittens. The care of the baby fell naturally on Priscilla's shoulders, and she poured out upon him all the affection of her famished heart. She carried him about in her long, lean arms, crooning baby songs in a voice which grew musical only in his service. The child slept in her arms at night, and the happiest hours of her day was

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when he waked her in the morning, cooing and gurgling with laughter—clutching with baby fingers at her gray wisps of hair.

When the child was a year old, her father, too, went to sleep beside her mother in the shadow of the hoary live-oaks, and the long, gray moss swayed alike over them both. It was then that Priscilla might have given up, had not baby fingers held her to life with powerful persuasion. Carmona crept about the house with awe for awhile, and the guitar and piano grew tuneless and silent. But the girl's nature rebelled against continued gravity, and in a few months her shallowness asserted itself, and she was as light-hearted as ever.

All Priscilla's thoughts now centered in the boy. She worked and economized, that he might be educated and trained as befitted an Alden. The austere eyes of her Puritan ancestors, she felt, followed her in dumb warning as to the responsibility in bringing up this boy, the last of a long line of upright gentlemen. How she watched the child's nature as it un-





"IN THE SHADOWS"



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folded. What the boy's life should be she had not yet determined, but slowly a resolution formed in her mind to send him at the proper time North, to Harvard, where he should be fitted for some profession. That he should be a loyal American she was determined. No belief in slavery or Southern shiftlessness would she allow to grow in his nature—not a germ of it. She would do what she could to engraft Northern ideas and principles.

The boy was dimly aware of the wealth of affection this quiet woman gave him, and, after a fashion, returned it. He rebelled at times against the strict habits she enforced; the regular hours of study, and the watchful care as to his companions. Sometimes when he was called from some boyish game, they chaffed him. Once Priscilla heard a boy shout after him: "Goodie, goodie, go home to the Yankee."

He whirled about and with eyes aflame rushed at the taunter. "You speak properly of my Aunt," he cried, glaring over his prostrate

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foe, “ and you apologize, too, before you get up, you puppy.”

His anger was so quick to act and his fist was so hard, that they soon learned to suppress their sentiments toward the “ queer Yankee woman.”

## Chapter III

**O**F course Carmona would marry again: that fact made itself evident after two months of widowhood. Among the number of young fellows who now haunted the house, "a courtin'" the pretty widow, a tall, lithe fellow named Leon Medici was most persistent. He had much the same style of picturesque beauty as Carmona, but marred it by flaring collars, gaudy waistcoats, and a general air of cheap splendor. His tight trousers, which flared over his little, high-heeled boots, were Priscilla's abhorrence, but the good-natured fellow, with his flashing smile and seraph's voice, seemed to find special favor in Carmona's eyes. He kept the principal cigar store of the place and was fairly prosperous. Young Medici spent most of his time under the orange-trees in the garden, singing like an angel to Carmona's newly strung guitar, and showered pop-guns and whistles in generous profusion on young Benjamin. He took the girl buggy-

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driving and did his best to ruin her digestion by copious treats of soda-water and bad ice cream. Priscilla saw how things were going, but Carmona would only laugh and toss her head in good-natured derision of any such possibility.

One morning the girl came down late to breakfast, a look of brilliant happiness in her eyes. She caught Priscilla nearly off her feet in a wild embrace, and then held up her left hand, on which sparkled a new amethyst ring.

“Leon Medici?” Priscilla asked. “Of course,” was the ecstatic rejoinder.

In the busy weeks which followed, the house was gay with echoing voices and stuffs of every hue. In all the bustle and confusion, one thought haunted Priscilla. “Was the boy to be taken away?” She could not bring herself to ask Carmona the question, but at night, staring into the darkness, she wondered with dull pain if she was to lose him. All day long, while busy in a thousand ways, the thought was a leaden weight on her heart. She hoped

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Carmona would speak of it, but the evening before the wedding came, and the question had not been asked. She waited till Carmona came in from the garden, and stood trembling as they lit their candles. Something in her look attracted Carmona's attention.

"What is it, Aunt?—you look as though you had seen a spook."

She could only answer with a pallid smile, as together they mounted the stairs. Priscilla kissed the girl at her door.

"I hope you will be very happy," she said; then turned brusquely and passed into her own room.

She could not sleep or even undress; but sat at the window watching, with unseeing eyes, the moon-flowers opening their petals to the moist, night air.

At last she rose stiffly, and crossing the hall to Carmona's door softly opened it. The Madonna above the bed stretched protecting arms in the dim light. Priscilla's heart seemed to stop its beating as she stood there. All her

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happiness lay in this childish creature's will. She fell on her knees with a loud sob. Carmona woke with a start.

"What is it?" she cried.

"Oh, Carmona, you won't take my boy away? You will leave him with me, won't you? He loves me and I'll give him all I have: all my care, all my love—only leave him."

Carmona sat up and stared at her half frightened and not wholly awake.

"Take him from you, of course not. I shouldn't know how to care for him. I can see him when I like, I suppose. Is that what is troubling you?"

With careless tenderness she soothed Priscilla's sobbing, for now the tears flowed freely, carrying a load of pain from her over-burdened heart.



## Chapter IV

AFTER the merry wedding, the house settled back into something of its old quiet. Priscilla now gave herself to the one absorbing purpose of her life; the care and education of the boy. There was no school save the parish school and the convent, and she was puzzled as to the groundwork for his college education, when she bethought herself of Dr. Rankin. She went to see him in the new parsonage under the palms, to ask if he would teach her boy. The old man beamed at her over his spectacles, delighted with the idea, and so it was arranged, greatly to her satisfaction.

And now began her struggle to get together the money to pay for his coming college expenses. It was a long succession of secret self-denial. She made all her own and his clothes, and learned to weave palmetto leaves into baskets. Her too luxurious tea was given up; also her "Boston Evening Transcript," which

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had been the one connecting link with the outside world. To save buying vegetables she planted a plot in her garden, and her tall figure was a familiar sight, bending over rake or hoe. It was a wearisome waiting as the cents grew into dollars, which every Saturday night she carried to the bank.

She kept the boy as much with her as possible, taking long walks with him and telling him of the far-away world in the North, and how men lived earnestly and with purpose among those granite hills where his forefathers were born. She kept before his eyes the honor and heroic independence of those upright Puritans, and drew graphic pictures of what his life should be, when he, their worthy descendant, should, in his turn, take an active part in the stirring life of the North.

And the lad's cheeks would glow and his eyes kindle as he listened. How impatiently he longed for his emancipation, and to what glorious heights would he attain. There was no limit to his ambition; his fervent nature only dreaded inaction.

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It was at this time that the first distant mutterings of the coming political storm were heard. The anti-slavery questions held the minds of the country. Thrice a week when the mail came, papers were received full of bitter editorials. Priscilla knew but little of it,—it hardly reached her. She saw men talking in excited knots on the Plaza and knew that in the Town Hall meetings were held at night, where violent harangues were delivered. Benjamin now spent many of his evenings there and would come in late, his eyes shining, but told her little of what he heard and saw. She would smooth his tossed curls with gentle touch and say:—

“I have longed all these years, dear, for this deliverance from evil.”

But Benjamin evidently did not take to politics and cared but little to talk on that subject.

At last the storm broke, and war was declared. When Priscilla heard of the first shot at her country's flag on Fort Sumter, a thrill of indignation shook her loyal soul. Troops were forming all over the country: men were

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leaving their homes and business to fight for their individual ideas of right and wrong. Gray coats formed and drilled, and Confederate flags floated from every roof.

In the midst of all this clamor and warlike confusion, a stinging doubt knocked at the door of the woman's conscience. Ought not Benjamin, to fight for those Northern principles which she had trained him to revere?

She paced the narrow garden paths, anxious and undone. At last she decided that the honor of self-sacrifice should be his alone and put the vexed question away. The following Autumn he would leave her for his college life. The money was almost ready and she was almost glad, for the young fellow seemed sadly in need of change and a wider field of study. Beside, he was not as robust and merry as usual,—he was silent and moody. She sometimes thought she saw a strange regret in his eyes.

One night he stayed out later than usual, and, becoming anxious, she went to the Plaza where the towns-people congregated. At the

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end of the square opposite a crowd was listening to the Mayor and applauding as he made some virulent remark about the North. Priscilla saw Carmona, her husband and Benjamin on the edge of the crowd, and she watched them with a feeling of uneasiness. Leon was talking excitedly and Benjamin seemed to listen with interest. Priscilla turned away and hurried home. She went to her room but did not undress and sat in the darkness, listening for Benjamin's steps.

He always came in for her good-night kiss and "God keep you" before going to his own room. An hour went by, and she heard the gate latch and the door-key turn in its lock. Then his slow steps up the stairs. But on the landing they ceased. She heard him hesitate, take a few steps toward her door, and then pass on to his room. She wondered at this, but concluded he thought her asleep and wished not to disturb her.

The next morning she cautioned him against listening to such speeches as she had heard

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the evening before, but he showed the same lack of interest in the subject, and, embracing her with more than his usual ardor, took his books and started for Dr. Rankin's.

He did not return at noon, and twilight deepened, but no light step came up the path. All night she sat waiting for him, with a fear which grew and stifled her, but dawn crept into the sky and he had not come. That terror crept higher and higher in her heart, dulling every other sense. At last as the sun rose, a disk of red in the East, she went out. She had tasted no food since the previous day and suddenly felt old and feeble and tottered slightly as she walked. By the Cathedral a group of people she knew were talking. They saw her coming and looked with curious pity at her quaint figure as she approached. She could hear the fountain's drowsy splash and the muffled notes of the organ through the church's open windows.

"I am anxious about my Benjamin," she said

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tremulously. "He did not come home last night."

They looked at one another. "Holy Mary!" a woman whispered, "she doesn't know."

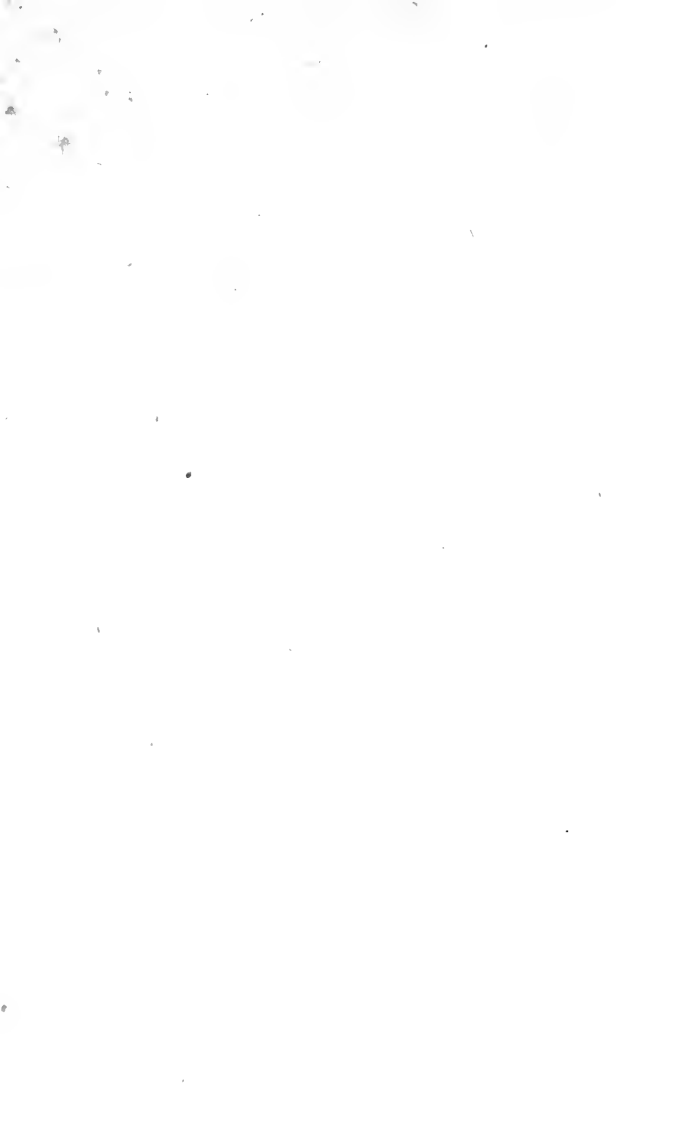
Then a stout, black-whiskered man, whom she remembered as the violent speaker at the meeting on the Plaza, broke into a coarse laugh.

"Miss Alden, your boy joined the Confederate army and marched away this morning."

A shrill cry drowned the notes of the organ. She clutched at the church door and fell.

\* \* \*

They carried her home, but mind, as well as heart, was broken. She still lives, an old, old woman. I saw her last winter, a shrunken, old-fashioned figure, sitting under the blossoming oleanders, in the garden of the *Tampa Bay Hotel*, with the good-natured Carmona, who humors her by talking of Benjamin. She still guards the money for him, whom she expects to return in the old, shambling coach of other days.











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